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The Washington Monthly

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THE GOP'S MASTER STRATEGIST

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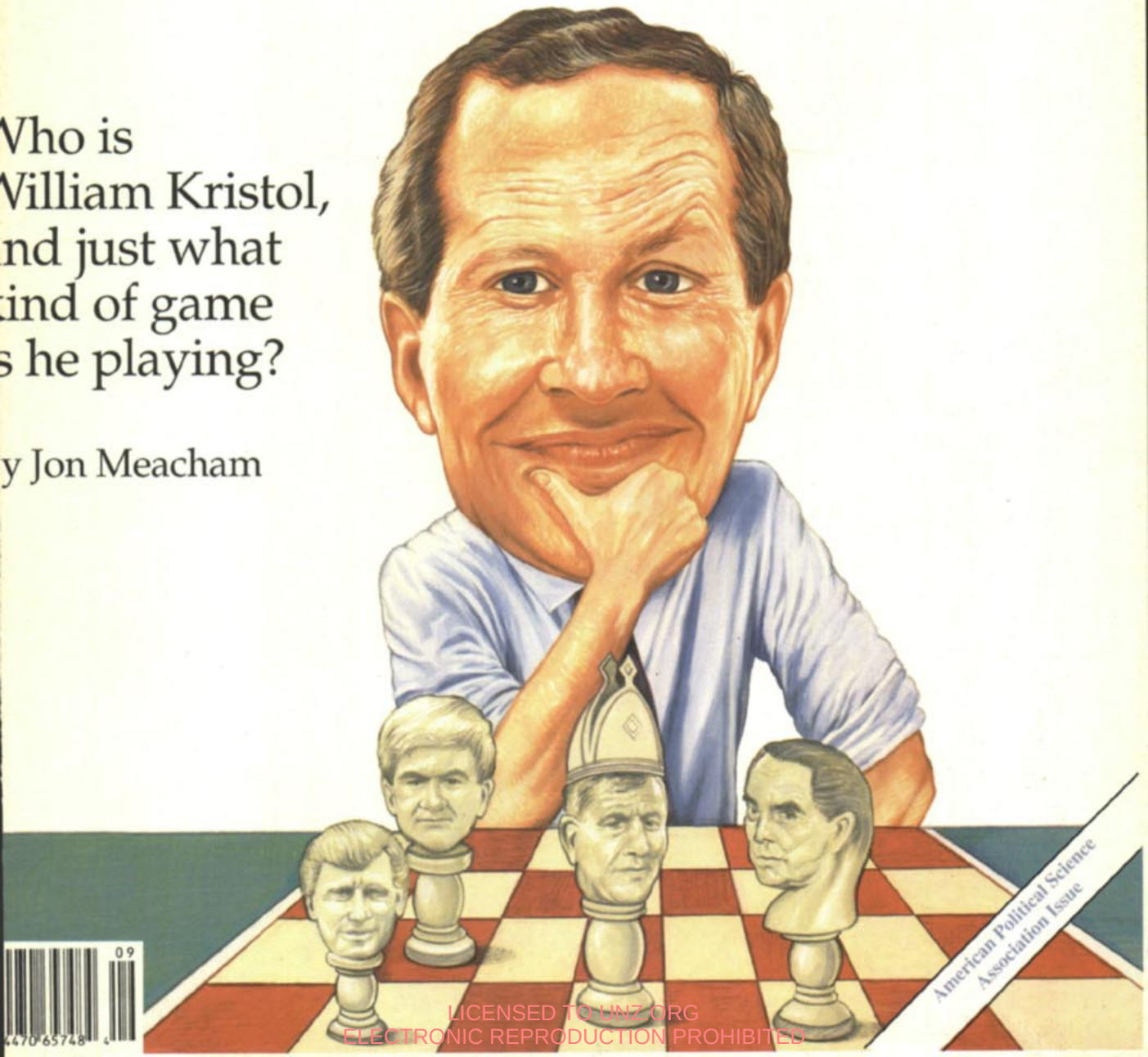
By Jon Meacham



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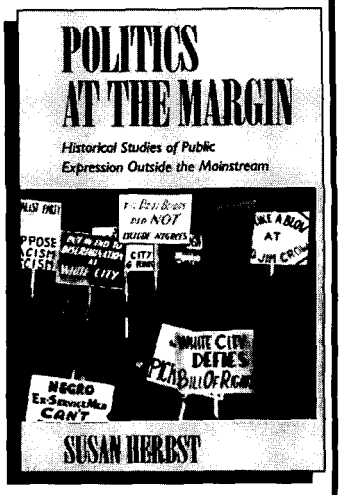

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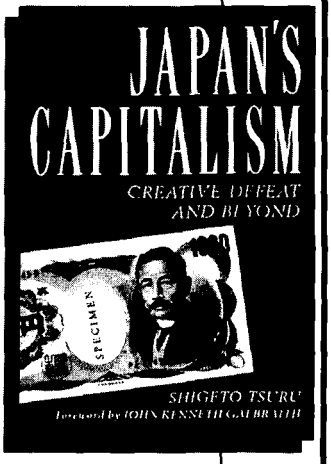

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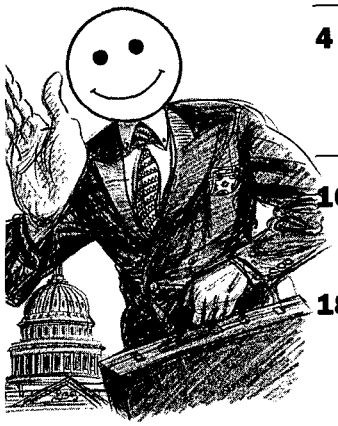
The Washington Monthly



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Letters

Head Cases

With reference to your remarks about treatment of the mentally ill ["Tilting at Windmills," July/August]: I watched the interview with Henry Cisneros and was impressed, as you were, with his recognition that homeless people need a lot more than housing.

In the absence of a transcript, I cannot quarrel with your quotation of his opinion that a third of the homeless are mentally ill and *another* third are substance abusers, but I am extremely suspicious of it. I am sure you will understand that a very high percentage of the mentally ill who must live on the streets drink heavily or use other drugs, as do many of the homeless who are not mentally ill. (They do it, it seems clear, in a mistaken effort to relieve their misery.) Thus, there are among the homeless a great many people who suffer serious mental illness *and* have an alcohol problem or a drug problem. The professionals categorize them as "dually diagnosed," and they constitute a significant portion of the homeless, but they must not be counted twice.

Further, I think it is important not to proceed from the fact that most of the homeless have needs beyond housing to the conclusion that they do not need housing. There is stark need for safe housing that is within reach of the poorest. Without something of the sort, no amount of treatment will have anything but a temporary effect. It is also worthy of note that treatment facilities and programs are almost as scarce as is housing. So your proposal for mandatory outpatient treatment, which sounds very sensible, is of much the same cloth as what you refer to rather snottily as "the usual liberal line."

The evidently unacceptable truth is that our society is not unable but simply unwilling to pay very slightly increased taxes to help those who, for whatever reasons, are unable to cope on their own.

Frank Melville
Norfolk, CT

The editors reply: It's unquestionably true that some of these people are truly home-less, and society should do all it can to provide housing for them. But we do believe that two-thirds of the problem is not lack of housing but need for treatment.

Money Matters

It was a pleasure to read John Kenneth Galbraith again ["Capitalism's Dark Shadows," July/August]. Like a fine wine, age has mellowed rather than dulled his keen perception, droll sense of humor, and way with the written word.

Hardly anyone argues today that anything so complex as a national economy that is itself a part of an even more complex world economy can be controlled by the state with results short of disaster. However, to argue that the distribution of the fruits of production among the participants in a *laissez faire* economy will automatically tend to converge, as the single equilibrium hypothesis suggests, seems to me (and evidently to Mr. Galbraith) equally ludicrous. In the absence of public policy that recognizes this reality and takes actions to mitigate it, the various levels of rich will continue to get richer, while the various levels of poor will continue to get poorer.

Samuel Taylor
Carmel, IN

Mob Rules

Since when have lawyers been held responsible for the crimes or qualities of their clients? Abraham Lincoln represented railroad interests in the 1850s and that did not make him a "robber baron." William McGowan's article on Harold Ickes ["The Mob and the Deputy Chief of Staff," July/August] insinuates that the deputy chief of staff is somehow disqualified from public service because his New York law firm represents a union reputed to have ties to "organized crime." All Americans are entitled to full and fair representation in our legal system, and lawyers are not guilty by association.

McGowan suggests that Ickes circumvented the attorney-client privilege while defending Mayor Dinkins. This violates a fundamental principle of American justice. This privilege belongs to the client, not the attorney. Only the client can release the attorney from this duty. Failure to protect the privilege is grounds for disbarment.

Recirculating tabloid scandal instead of reporting the facts strikes me as poor journalism. Not since Senator Joe McCarthy have I seen such unsubstantiated character assassination. The real conundrum is why a defender of the underdog need suffer such a hatchet job from the "legitimate" press.

Jeanne Herring
Ridgewood, NJ

The editors reply: We believe lawyers *are* guilty by association when they continue to represent a well-heeled crooked organization. When the crook is poor, we have great sympathy for the lawyer who

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takes his moral obligation seriously and represents him. But when the crook is rich and has many lawyers at his beck and call, why should a decent lawyer lend his credibility to an evil cause?

Oops

Pardon I.

O.K., so Dan Quayle isn't too bright and can't spell, but that's no reason to speak his language, as Walter Shapiro did in his review of *Standing Firm* ["The Book of Dan," July/August].

"If only the conventions of quasi-objective journalism allowed my colleagues and I . . ." Dan would be proud, feel right at home, offer to share some used golf balls.

Is this empathy or what?

James Weinstein
Editor, In These Times
Chicago, IL

The editors reply: Nostra culpa.

Clothes Horsing

I think there are several reasons for the appalling cost of women's clothing ["Tilting at Windmills," June]. One, which has been overlooked, is that women no longer know how to sew. The women's movement has had many great successes, but I think the death of universal home economics classes is not one of them. Even into the 1970s, there were many home seamstresses with adequate skill to make a simple pair of pants. If we faced a choice between spending $65 for a store-bought skirt and spending $15 and three hours making it ourselves, many of us opted for the latter.

An even larger factor in the rise in women's clothing prices is the "Dress for Success" concept. Young workers, especially women, have been indoctrinated with the idea that, to rise in the company, you must dress up like the boss—or better yet, the boss' boss. So they end up spending more than half their disposable income on clothes, telling themselves it's an investment in their careers.

I also think prices are rising, not just because women are working, but because a large number are working and remaining single. Many single women postpone the purchase of big-ticket items such as china, crystal, silver, and home appliances because they associate those purchases with married life. That leaves a good amount of cash available for clothing purchases.

Finally, and most importantly, single working women (like so many of the rest of us) are disheartened about saving. Today, in my not-terribly-fancy suburb, a rather basic house costs about $200,000. That means a single woman who wants to buy that house has to come up with $40,000 for a downpayment. If she makes $30,000 a year, and saves 10 percent of her pre-tax income (no small feat), it will take her more than 10 years for her to put a downpayment together. And even if she did, she couldn't qualify for the mortgage. (My realtor says, with spotless credit and no other debt, you need an annual income of $65,000 to buy that house.)

Elizabeth Austin
Oak Park, IL

Thanks a lot

You guys tick me off.

I get a bunch of magazines and other stuff that I have to read, and I have developed a certain rhythm that usually gets me through this as needed of an evening.

Then your little magazine comes along, just a tiny part of the periodical pile, and I end up having to read *every* word on *every* page. It throws the whole evening's schedule askew.

Where's the fluff, the filler? Don't you know anything about what magazine readers expect?

You keep this up and I'll just have to keep reading. Darn.

Mark Lono
Lutz, FL

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Tilting at Windmills

A friend of mine from Los Angeles wrote me recently about a black friend of his: "This guy is middle class or better, definitely a solid citizen. He told me that he knew O.J. was guilty—just by the way he looked in court when they showed the pictures of the bodies, and by the fact that it took him a month to mount a campaign to hunt for the killers of his children's mother—but that even so (and this is the kicker), if he were on the jury, HE WOULD VOTE NOT GUILTY. When I asked why, he replied, 'If it was good enough for the Menendez brothers, it's good enough for O.J. And besides, I know the LAPD isn't above framing a suspect.' I can't stress enough that this was a very level-headed guy saying this. The prosecution is doomed, I think.". . .

As regular readers know, I have consistently viewed Whitewater as a trivial story that was fanned into dangerous flame by a relentlessly partisan GOP, scandal-hungry reporters, and a paranoid First Lady who kept heightening suspicion by so grudgingly conceding her tiny sins.

At the August hearings, almost all the administration witnesses seemed determined to imitate the First Lady. Instead of saying "I can't recall," why didn't George Stephanopoulos admit he wanted to fire Jay Stephens? It would have been perfectly natural for him not to want an enemy of the Clintons in a position to persecute them. So many of the answers of Steiner, Ickes, and Altman, as well as Stephanopoulos', were patently calculated and unnecessarily evasive.

So we are left with Whitewater, a scandal that isn't evil, to which the administration's reaction, while not evil, has been so unwise as to inspire serious doubt about the people who are leading us. In the case of the First Lady, this doubt is especially unfortunate, since many of us had counted on her as the steady and clear-eyed partner who would balance her talented but erratic husband. . . .

That a spouse can have a great and good influence on a president is illustrated by Doris Kearns Goodwin's absorbing new book about Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt from 1940 to 1945 (see the review by Chalmers Roberts on page 58). While the Roosevelts were neither sexually nor tempermentally compatible, Eleanor was almost always a benign influence on the way her husband carried out his public responsibilities, constantly reminding him of his duty to blacks, Jews, and the downtrodden as more and more of his time was consumed by preparing for and winning World War II. And although neither party in this marriage was perfect, it is amazing how little that is ignoble can be found in their story. The dedication and wisdom they brought to leading this nation set a standard I pray the Clintons will strive to meet. . . .

A White House official recently confided to a friend his amazement at how reactive life can be at the top. "There's almost no time for doing what I hoped to do, which is to take a systematic overview of the government, figure out what needs to be done, and do it. Instead, virtually every moment is consumed with reacting to today's news." . . .

Want to know why many congressmen are secretly hoping that health reform can be kept alive as an issue for the next session? They have discovered it is the Comstock Lode.

"Fundraising for congressional races is skyrocketing," reports *Roll Call*, "with receipts for this year running $18 million ahead of the same point in 1992." It's hard to imagine that the fellows will let this cash cow die. Even if it appears to have breathed its last, it almost certainly will be revived for another major milking in time to finance the '96 campaign. Or, in the event some kind of bill is enacted this year, it will surely be deemed "imperfect," requiring new legislation to remedy its defects which, even if they are not apparent to the public, will surely be discovered by the lobbyists who got rich this year and—like the congressmen—want to keep the issue alive so that they can get rich again.

Lobbyists must find problems that require their services to fix. Crying wolf is the name of their game. They have to keep their clients in a constant state of panic in order to justify their existence, not to mention their high fees. An FCC official recently witnessed an illustration of this practice when a cable company executive complained that his lobbyist had told him 700 pages of new regulations had been issued by the FCC. In fact, there were 13 pages of regulations with 700 pages of *background* material. And the lobbyist had also failed, as he set

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up his client for a bigger retainer for next year, to mention that the regulations in question are largely favorable to the industry, including one that permits cable operators to increase their prices with inflation. . . .

When they don't want to know, they don't want to know. You've read about how the leaders of the C.I.A. managed to avoid becoming suspicious when Aldrich Ames wheeled into the agency's parking lot in a Jaguar that retailed at half his annual salary. Now comes the news that Michael Dowd, who was robbing drug dealers and dealing cocaine while serving as a police officer in New York's 75th precinct, drove a bright red Corvette and, according to Joseph Treaster of *The New York Times,* "sometimes had a limousine pick him up at the station house for gambling trips to Atlantic City"—all without arousing the slightest suspicion in the minds of officials who were supposed to be overseeing his work. . . .

Even though reform legislation is pending, I doubt that congressional junkets are seriously threatened. Not only do the members love them, but too many influential Americans benefit from similar rackets.

Consider the lawyers. It used to be that they had only one tax-deductible vacation a year, to the state bar association meeting, which didn't cost the rest of us very much because it was usually held at a hotel within the state. But now, many lawyers take three, four, or five trips annually under the guise of "continuing legal education." And these days they don't just go up the road a piece. A recent edition of *The Texas Lawyer*, for example, carried an advertisement headlined "Sun, Sand, Sea and CLE" offering a combination of "fun and information in Montego Bay, Jamaica, a lush setting ideally suited for recreation and reflection." The "education" feature was a "practice skill" video that "lets you sharpen practice skills at your own leisurely pace," which is code for "only you will know if you don't watch it."

But the CLE champion may be two judges from the 5th Circuit of Louisiana who took a legal study tour of Southeast Asia, the brochure for which, according to the New Orleans *Times-Picayune,* "displayed a cover photograph of sampans floating on a placid sea, advertised a sunset cruise in Hong Kong Harbor and promised participants they

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would 'Bask on the Beautiful Beaches of Bali.'" In the judges' case, Louisiana taxpayers paid the bill of $7,642. In the case of the Texas lawyers who played golf or reflected in Montego Bay, as in other continuing education conferences, it's the federal taxpayers who get stuck with a hefty portion of the burden because of the tax deductions the participants take for their expenses. Doctors and other professional groups, even morticians, take these deductions. One hesitates to think how much of the deficit has been wasted by subsidizing all these vacations. But no one will blow the whistle because so many influential people who benefit from the hustle will piously proclaim that the expense is "educational."

Of course, there is some legitimate junketeering, but if the primary motive for these trips is truly educational, then why are so many to glamorous destinations and so few to Buffalo or Indianapolis?. . .

Speaking of professional piety, the law firm of Sieben, Grose, Von Holtum, McCoy & Carey, Ltd. is running an advertisement in a lawyers' magazine that features a photograph of Jack Vigoren, an attorney who is also the choir director of a Lutheran church. "Refer Your P.I. Cases to a Higher Authority," says Vigoren, shown clothed in his Sunday robes.

"Being a lawyer is sort of like being in a choir—you do your part to make sure things stay in harmony.

"And from time to time, that means letting someone else take the lead role. So when a client comes to me with a personal injury case, I make a referral to Sieben, Grose, Von Holtum, McCoy & Carey." The small print at the bottom of the ad contains a reference to "referral fees," which is the polite term for the kickbacks that assure the referring lawyer will not have to wait until he reaches heaven to receive his reward. . . .

The C.I.A. is closing 15 of its stations in Africa. I hope it closes a lot more around the world. Think about it. In how many countries do we really need a covert presence? There may be a need for good reporting of political and economic developments, but why can't the State Department's Foreign Service officers do such reporting? In fact, are not political and economic reporting supposed to be among their primary duties?

Yes, there *are* a few places that pose either a military or a terrorist threat where a covert presence is necessary to keep an eye on what the bad guys are doing behind the scenes. But we definitely do not need a C.I.A. presence in every geographic entity called a nation.

By the way, did you know about the C.I.A.'s great triumph in Africa? It put Idi Amin on its payroll.

And did you also know that, according to Walter Pincus of *The Washington Post*, "At least seven C.I.A. station chiefs have been removed from their posts in recent years because of unsavory personal or professional activities"? One, in Cyprus, had stolen an icon from a church; another, in Peru, had threatened his staff with a pistol.

Yet another example comes from David Corn's illuminating new book, reviewed on page 52 of this issue, which shows what bad news for the Republic was the career of Ted Shackley, who despite repeated errors in judgment, was repeatedly promoted by the C.I.A.

The C.I.A., like so many government agencies, needs radical surgery to rid itself of both bad apples and pointless work. In my view, the most serious problem in American government is that no one wants to face how widespread

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is the need or how deep the cuts must be if we are to have truly efficient public institutions. . . .

Lowell High School is San Francisco's best. If your child wants to get in, he or she, if black or Hispanic, has to score 53 on an admissions test; if white, 58; if Chinese, 62. Is this equality of opportunity? . . .

I recently spent several weeks in the San Francisco area and had a chance to catch up on the local newspapers. I am delighted to see that the *Chronicle,* which has had some dismal days in its history, now appears to be on the upswing, much better than when I last read it.

But I'm troubled to note an apparent decline in what has long been one of my favorite papers, the *San Jose Mercury News.* In its June 30 edition, there was a full page color ad entitled "10 reasons why you should purchase your new or used car from a factory-authorized dealer" which included the line, "The *Mercury News* is proud of its long-standing partnership with the Northern California new car dealers as we work together to meet the area's unparalleled transportation needs." Car dealers don't strike me as the right "partners" for a newspaper.

I later learned that the ad was part of a larger story that definitely does not add luster to the *Mercury News'* reputation. It seems that a May 22 article by Mark Schwanhausser that gave advice on how to see behind the sticker price had infuriated local car dealers, who had then pulled their ads from the *Mercury News.* The ad I had seen was part of the paper's effort to kiss and make up which also included a follow-up article saying the original story could have been better written and should have included dealer comments. That just doesn't sound like the *Mercury News* I had come to know and admire. . . .

The O.J. Simpson case has demonstrated how the press can educate America on an issue: Within a few days in July, points out our friend Ted Marmor, most Americans became experts on the Fourth Amendment's protections against search and seizure. Wouldn't it be nice if the press took equal care to educate the public on important legislative issues such as health care, explaining, for example, reforms that are working, such as those in Hawaii, Canada, and Rochester, New York?

And, I might add, isn't it a shame that the time television devoted to the relatively unimportant Whitewater hearings wasn't at least matched by time devoted to truly important hearings such as those on health care? . . .

Bennington College is by all accounts in desperate fiscal shape. In an effort not only to halt the escalating cost of higher education but actually reduce it, Bennington is cutting back its faculty and eliminating tenure. This is a move I applaud for all colleges when the professors have become so arrogant that they refuse to teach a reasonable schedule. Why not require at least 10 hours a week? The scandal today is that many big shot professors teach fewer than five.

One qualification I would make to the Bennington approach is to retain some tenured positions—maybe 15 or 20 percent—as an absolute protection for free speech and eccentricity. But I see no reason why the rest of the faculty should not have enough courage to be willing to risk firing after the expiration of their contracts, which range from one to five years. In Congress, the members of the House have only two years or less of job security. And in journalism, most reporters have to exercise their First Amendment rights without any guarantee of job security.

The tenure issue is growing in importance because the end of mandatory retirement at 65 means that tenured old codgers who can't or won't do their share of the work are hanging on and keeping bright young teachers from being hired. . . .

Speaking of higher education, the new 30-year student loan is one of the most underreported social revolutions in my memory. *The New York Times*, for example, put the story on page 11 of its July 3 edition. The change from the 10-year limit, which has been the standard, means that student loans will no longer imprison their recipients, forcing them to make career choices on the basis of potential income instead of whether they really care about the work. People with low incomes can choose a plan with monthly payments of 4 to 15 percent of a salary. Of course, the young medical student who chooses radiology because he wants to get rich will still do so. But the one who really wants to be a family doctor in a small town is now free to do just that. The *Times'* Washington bureau was so blind to the significance of this story that New York had to rely on the Associated Press for the news.

And the press generally failed to point out the loan program's

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crucial defect: collectibility by the IRS, a feature Clinton had wanted, was omitted from the bill by Congress. This means the reform may face the same deadbeat problem that has plagued previous student loan programs. . . .

The long-term income-contingent loan is an ancient cause of this magazine. Another of its advocates is Milton Friedman, who has shared many of this magazine's concerns, including the waste of Social Security payments on those who don't need them, the need to give money to the working poor through a negative income tax, and the need to free the country from the dead weight of its tenured civil service.

I had a chance to chat with Friedman not long ago and, having agreed on the things we agree on, we began to explore where we disagreed. It quickly became clear that he doubts government is ever the best solution to any problem, while I think that it can be the right answer as, for example, I do in the case of health care. Anyway, the only concession I was able to get from Friedman is that the post office did work well in the thirties, forties, and fifties. In fact, Friedman acknowledged that it was crucial to romance in the days when you could count on your girl getting a letter at a certain time if you mailed it at a certain time. . . .

Another bit of support for a *Monthly* cause comes from Patricia Cornwell, the mystery writer. If you like mysteries and don't know her, go to your bookstore tomorrow and buy one of her books. She shares our belief in a writer's need to acquire experience in the field he or she writes about. She got her experience as a medical examiner before she attained success as a writer. Listen to what she says:

> When I first wrote crime fiction in the early eighties, the stories turned to air in my hands. I could not grasp the characters nor understand what they felt. My voice had no authority. I needed more than library articles and interviews. . . [so] I spent 12 hours a day in surgical scrubs, assisting forensic pathologists as they performed autopsies in a Richmond, Va. morgue. I will never forget the first time I placed my gloved hand in a chest cavity and was startled to find that the blood was cold. . . . No matter how well I may do, I can never forsake the work that got me where I am—the dogged research into time of death, the slides in the lab, the slab in the morgue.

Another writer whose work was based on experience was the late Judge Lois Forer, many of whose articles appeared in this magazine. Instead of relying completely on other people's facts or what she guessed the truth was, as most writers do, her points were based on what she had actually seen in her courtroom. Whether she was arguing against mandatory sentences or in favor of orphanages, you knew that she knew what she was talking about. . . .

I grew up in Charleston, West Virginia, a lovely town set between green hills with a river running through it. The one drawback was that when you had to leave town, going west or east, you were forced to pass through ugly chemical plants that belched fumes that smelled so bad you were scared to take another breath. Today, the odor has been eliminated. But the dangerous chemicals that produced it are still there. To give you an idea of what I'm talking about, remember the Bhopal Chemical leak in India that killed 3,000 people? It was caused by 50,000 pounds of a chemical called MIC. Just outside Charleston, 240,000 pounds of MIC is stored. If it is released, it will kill people within 9 miles of the plant. And DuPont's plant has a tank that contains 40 million pounds of ammonia that would kill those within 25 miles. . . .

At the July hearings where the administration presented its welfare plan, Senator Moynihan claimed that welfare recipients are undergoing "speciation," that is, becoming a separate biological species, and that in the ghettos 9-year-old girls are having babies. The following night, he went on Charlie Rose and repeated the speciation theory, and it turns out that he has been saying it around Washington for months at meetings on welfare reform.

Since it takes millions of years for a species to form, it seems to me that the throwing around of "speciation" by the Senate committee chairman in charge of welfare legislation is, to put it mildly, big news. And yet, except for one paper that I know of, *Newsday*, the press has completely ignored what Moynihan said. *The New York Times* ran the hearing comment four days later as the second item in the "Political Notes" column in the Metro section. *The Washington Post*, as far as I know, has never mentioned it. To me, the only plausible explanation is that Moynihan's friends and admirers in the press have decided to bury the story on the grounds that a) he must be on to something that most politicians don't have the guts to talk about, and b) because he took such an unfair beating for the Moynihan Report, he deserves to be spared the exaggerated attacks from blacks and the left that a front-page story about "speciation" would inevitably bring. Still, it's hard to imagine anybody else of Moynihan's eminence getting this

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kind of a break—think what would happen if Bob Dole or Dan Quayle talked about "speciation" in a Senate hearing.

Moynihan wouldn't be saying this if he didn't have the kind of lurid idea of welfare mothers that only someone who has never met one or who has been away from firsthand contact for a long, long time could entertain. The lesson of my life is that firsthand experience with any group makes it impossible to think in terms of innate inferiority. You do start worrying about how and why some groups can create problems for themselves, but an assumption of innate inferiority seems to be behind what Moynihan is saying. And the press wouldn't be giving him a break if it didn't share the same lurid idea.

Would it be possible for such attitudes to take hold if it weren't assumed that the people Moynihan is talking about here are practically all black? I'm not accusing Moynihan and his allies of being *consciously* racist, but an unconscious or semiconscious assumption of black inferiority does seem to be seeping into the liberal media and political culture.

Of course, liberals have richly contributed to this atmosphere themselves by engaging in a lot of pretend outrage and trying to prevent things from being discussed. For that reason Charles Murray's forthcoming book might be healthy because, if as rumored, it attempts to prove black intellectual inferiority, it will bring the whole subject out into the light of day to be wrestled with.

My own experience tells me that blacks are not inferior but that there are real problems with black performance—witness San Francisco's Lowell High School—and with black attitudes—witness my L.A. friend's black friend, who would acquit O.J. even if Simpson is guilty. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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Washington's Nice Problem

It may look nasty from the outside, but what really ails the nation's capital is too many nice people who don't want to leave

BY DAVID SEGAL

"This is a town that is full of evil people," says Alan Greenspan in Bob Woodward's *The Agenda.* "If you can't deal with every day having people try to destroy you, you shouldn't even think of coming down here."

Of course, Washington was thought to be a swamp of villains and miscreants even before Harry Truman famously declared that "If you want a friend in Washington, bring a dog," and that reputation endures today. Where else would a swell guy like former chief of staff Mack McLarty—nicknamed "the Nice"—get demoted and then have to read in *The New Yorker* that "some used his moniker in a denigrating way; to them his niceness proved his failure of assimilation." The implication was not only that McLarty needed to be a far tougher gatekeeper for the president, but that around these parts, *nice people don't fit in.* Phil Gramm, whom no one has ever accused of being too nice, is fond of saying that he is doing the "Lord's work in the Devil's city."

The Devil's city? Granted, presidents—especially the current president—tend to get roughed up in Washington, and occasionally a lawmaker will go after a colleague in the House or Senate. But in general there's surprisingly little nastiness here. Even Congress is tame compared to the acrimony in, say, Japan's Diet, where legislators often punch each other in the face. No, the city's power strata—legislators, journalists, administration officials—are all in fairly high spirits. The truth is, Washington is a nice town filled with nice people being nice to each other. This explains why so few leave. This also explains *how* they stay.

Most of Washington's players come to town for a specific job. Politicians get elected to work on behalf of certain constituents, political appointees arrive because they have managed to land a position in the government, and countless aides come to assist these people. These jobs are not lifelong positions. Much of official Washington, therefore, is always facing the prospect of looking elsewhere for work—or going home.

But once you're here, it's not easy to go home.

Research assistance for this article provided by Liz Greenspan, Celeste Katz, and Rachel Van Dongen.

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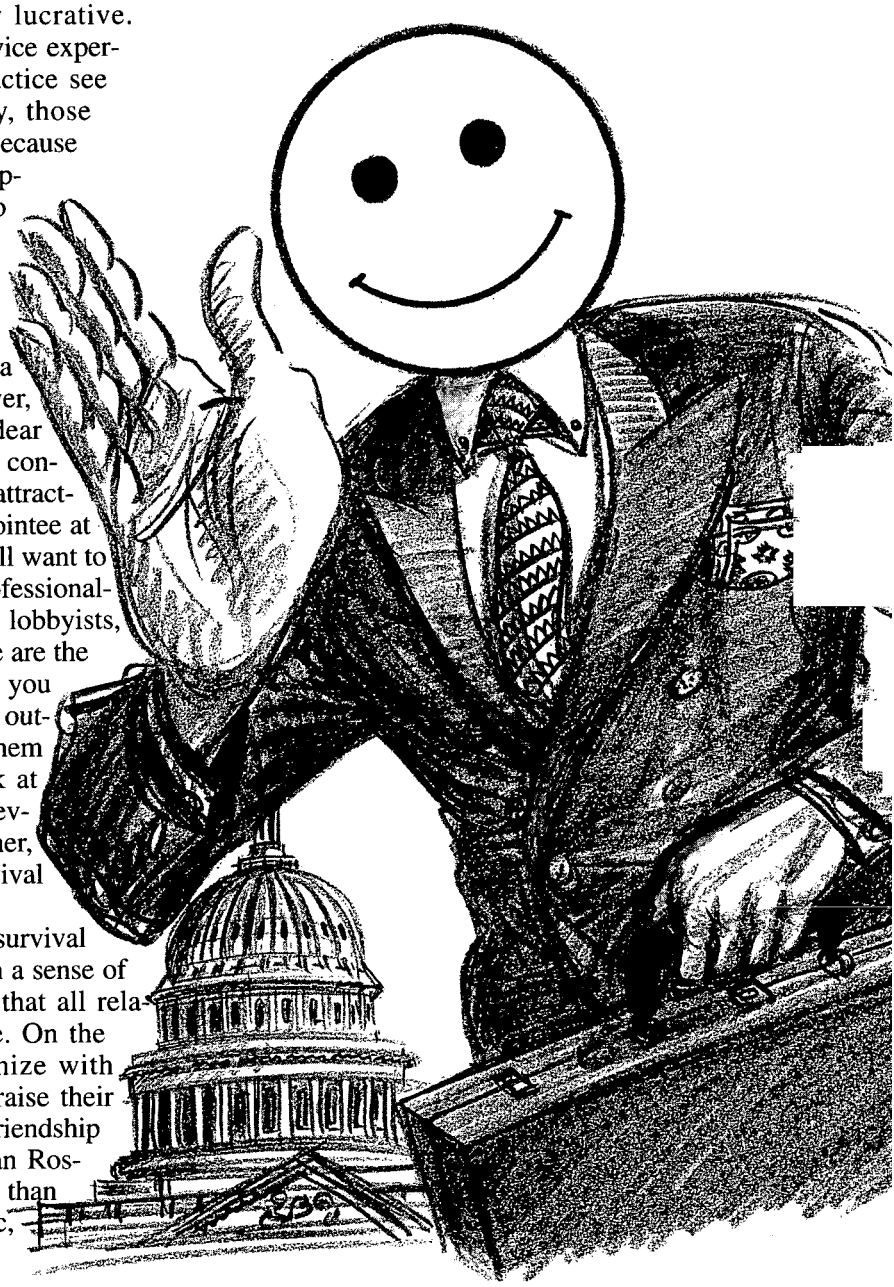
You settle in, the kids are in school, you buy a house. And why would you want to leave? The town affords folks the chance to work on important issues with important people; it's hard to go back to the farm after you've seen the Department of Agriculture. Of course, once you've been here a while, you have an expertise and a set of contacts that make you marketable, and the Washington market can be very lucrative. Those who parlay their public service expertise and contacts into private practice see their salaries soar. Consequently, those who are forced to leave—either because they lost an election or weren't reappointed—are usually plotting to come back. Everyone else is working hard to make sure they don't have to leave at all.

But how do you stay, given that most jobs in Washington last only a few years? There's just one answer, son. You've got to network for dear life—and fast. That means making contacts, fattening your Rolodex, and attracting allies. If you're a political appointee at say, the Department of Labor, you'll want to be friendly to anyone you meet professionally: union leaders, interest groups, lobbyists, and your fellow bureaucrats. These are the people who are most likely to help you find another job or offer you one outright. And you can be helpful to them as well, either through your work at Labor now, or as a contact in whatever you end up doing next. Together, you'll create a sort of mutual survival network.

Because everyone here needs a survival network, the place is suffused with a sense of "We're all in this together." Not that all relationships in Washington are fake. On the contrary, people tend to empathize with those who help them survive or raise their profile; sometimes the bonds of friendship here are very real. When Rep. Dan Rostenkowski was indicted on no less than 17 charges of defrauding the public, one sensed that *Post* columnist David Broder, Washington's grandfatherly voice of reason, meant it when he said he was sorry to see Rosty deposed.

Couldn't all this chumminess and respect just lend the nation's capital an air of pleasant, small-town warmth? Well, it could, but since it's the



Victor Juhasz

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seat of the federal government, the sense of mutual enterprise here can have important implications for politics as well. If virtually everyone you come across is a would-be ally, then you will be averse to criticizing anyone too loudly, and you'll steer away from reforms that might rattle present or future friends. This creates an insularity and resistance to change that makes anything that rocks the boat—loud dissent, ideological passion—rare. The problem is that the boat is not always heading in the right direction, and often it is simply operating in a way that enriches those on board rather than makes sense for the rest of us.

To get a sense of how toxic Washington niceness can be, let's look at three different facets of the same problem. First, how survival networking can lead to bad policy; then, how it can lead to wasted millions in taxpayer dollars; and finally, how it can turn around even those politicians who come to town looking to buck the system.

A Toast to the Chairman

Watching Clinton juke and Dole jibe on TV, it may look as though wrangling and partisan disputes are all that ail the cause of health reform. But while politicians look for an answer for the issue's thorniest question—how to pay for universal coverage—Washington's niceness has helped to keep an obvious source of revenue off the table.

By any reasonable measure, taxes on booze are at a historic low, about 37 percent in real dollars of what they were after the last major tax increase, which, by the way, occurred in 1951. Back then, alcohol taxes were 5 percent of all federal revenues; today they are roughly one-half of 1 percent. Moreover, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, between 25 to 40 percent of bed space in hospitals is given over to alcohol-related disorders, at a price to the public and our health care system of something close to $100 billion dollars each year.

Add to all this polling results which show that Americans think taxing the alcohol industry is a great way to help pay for universal health coverage. Last February, a *USA Today* poll found that 85 percent favor higher taxes on alcohol to finance health reform, *two percent more than said the same thing about tobacco.* To summarize, here's an industry that is undertaxed, that costs the health care system a ton of money, and that a huge majority of us would like to see pitch in for health care reform. A fat and legitimate target for Bill and Hillary, wouldn't you say?

As it turns out, no. Clinton quietly let the alcohol industry off the hook way back in September when he decided to drop it from the list of sin tax increases he would seek from Congress. What happened? In short, Clinton decided to avoid a fight he felt he would probably lose. "You can't get into this issue," one of his aides told *The Washington Post* at the time. "It will just spin around and you'll never win." Even the often less conciliatory first lady felt that a liquor tax increase was simply not possible.

Sadly, the Clintons were probably right. The liquor lobby is one of the richest, most powerful, and best connected in town, and fighting it could have cost the administration more political capital than it could spare. The lobby has friends throughout Washington and a critical ally in Dan Rostenkowski, former chairman of the committee through which any alcohol tax would have had to pass. Rostenkowski provided some valuable help to the booze industry when he helped steer Clinton away from any alcohol taxes by telling him that if one type of alcohol were taxed, all three—beer, wine, and spirits—would have to be taxed, a neat shorthand for "I'm on your side, Chief, but this will be an awful brawl."

If an alcohol tax hike is clearly overdue and obviously popular with Americans, why would Rosty side with the alcohol industry? Money is part of the explanation. The ex-chairman received thousands in alcohol PAC dollars during his years in office. But his water-carrying for the alcohol industry also doubled nicely as a good deed for someone who is both an old ally and a very nice guy.

Meet Raymond McGrath. A Republican elected from New York's 5th district in 1980, he spent 12 years in the House of Representatives, the last eight of which he was a member of the House Ways and Means Committee. In 1991, McGrath was sitting on a runway at LaGuardia Airport trying to get back to D.C. for his child's third birthday party when a plane on another runway landed and blew a tire, shutting down the airport for eight hours. "I figured no matter how hard I tried, I wasn't going to be a good father if I stayed in the House," says McGrath.

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The same day he announced his retirement, job offers from the city's most successful lobbying outfits lit up his phones. "A lot of people were gracious enough to call hours after the announcement," says McGrath. "They asked me 'Do you have something lined up? Let us talk to you.' I soon had half a dozen very good offers." McGrath mulled over a few options and thought about starting his own firm, but decided against it because, as he says, he "didn't want to steal clients from my friends." He was most attracted to a job that gave him the chance to run something. In April 1991, he became the president of the Beer Institute.

It may sound like a lab for testing six packs, but the Beer Institute is actually the lobbying arm of the beer industry. Located in a sleek high-rise a quick car ride from the Capitol, the Institute's offices feature a collection of Norman Rockwell-style paintings of idealized scenes—dad meeting the boyfriend, twentysomethings idling by the pool, a beach cookout. The twist is that nearly everyone in the paintings is drinking a beer.

Raymond McGrath is tall, distinguished-looking, and 52 years old. With his fine gray hair, silver-rimmed glasses, and unaffected charm, he looks so much like a politician that he could be an actor playing one. "Coffee, tea, juice . . . beer?" he asks me with a grin early one morning in July. Sitting in his large corner office, he smiles easily as he explains why he's at the Beer Institute.

"I came here because I had a young family and I was neglecting them," he says. "I started getting the guilts about traveling to New York for weekends and I knew that if I stayed in the House, I'd leave feet first. When I told my wife that I wasn't running, she was so happy she said she was going to throw up."

In the wake of the decision, a local newspaper ran an editorial praising his reason for retiring and calling McGrath "Father of the Year." His new job allows him to spend a lot more time with his wife and three children, one of whom has Attention Deficit Disorder. He's a better provider these days as well. He declined to specify how much he makes, but his predecessor's salary was $217,000 in 1993.

How does he earn that money? His value to his present employers, he says, is simply that he knows the players on the Ways and Means Committee.

"I know where their sensitivities are, things to avoid," he says. "You want to avoid putting a member in a position where he has to oppose you and I know which members can't allow certain things. But you have to have been there and know that history to know where the opposition is going to come."

For his first year on the job, he was barred from going to the Hill by new ethics laws, but even though it's now perfectly legal for him to lobby his former colleagues face to face in their offices, he says he rarely visits the House.

"I have a whole bunch of people who do that," he tells me. "I send letters, once in a while I pick up a phone. I've seen the former chairmen occasionally on a social basis, and obviously I see the other guys at events."

Spend a little time with Raymond McGrath and you wish you could see him at events, too. Meeting the man puts an appealing and human face on what is arguably a greedy lobby financed by huge, not-so-appealing corporations. He's an open, friendly, family-oriented guy—*Father of the Year, for heaven's sake*—unpretentious and plain spoken. He's so damn nice you want to buy *him* a beer. And so, apparently, does everyone else. McGrath's office is littered with memorabilia from a life in politics, including a photograph of him sharing a tall one with former House pasha Silvio Conte; there he is arm in arm with Tip O'Neill; here he is posing with his family and Ronald Reagan.

And on the wall, above a slew of Chamber of Commerce plaques, is a framed shot of McGrath hugging the not-yet-indicted Dan Rostenkowski. Under the picture, Rosty scribbled a tribute to McGrath for some valuable help in 1986: "I had no better friend on the tax bill (on your side of the aisle)." And then, camaraderie getting the better of the chairman's spelling, "Your a pal!"

Of course, Raymond McGrath and his pal Rostenkowski didn't single-handedly kill the alcohol sin tax. The industry's own survival network is vast and pours dollars into congressional coffers far and wide. One of its power centers, St. Louis, Missouri, headquarters of Anheuser-Busch, is in the home district of House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt.

But McGrath and Rostenkowski did their share of the work. And why not? Put yourself in the

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chairman's place. Pulling on one side are polls and abstract numbers presented by crusading non-profiteers you've never met, from places with names like the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Pulling the other way is a guy who has been through some battles with you, a war buddy who did you a good turn in the trenches some years ago. He was the one standing next to you as Reagan signed the '86 tax bill into law, the two of you grinning like fishermen beside a bluefish in a photograph seen around the country. He's also a jewel of a guy, just trying to earn a living, just trying to spend more time with his kids. And you know the wife and she's lovely too, and the alcohol industry has been awful good to you at campaign time and pretty soon you hear yourself saying, "I'm with you, Chief, but this will be an awful brawl."

Small wonder that when Rostenkowski was indicted on fraud charges, the donors to his defense fund read like the catering list at the world drinking Olympics: Anheuser-Busch, E&J Gallo Winery, Wine Merchants Ltd., Wine and Spirit Wholesalers. Prominent among those who made contributions as individuals, naturally, was Mr. Raymond McGrath.

A Town Full of Mavericks

For most legislators, the process of learning to get along with everybody begins well before they decide to retire. New arrivals quickly learn that they have an excellent reason to be nice to just everyone. Let's start with the lobbyists. Since a ton of money is needed to run for office, congressmen are survival networking for dollars almost immediately. The trick is making it seem as though the desperately needed rewards of PAC money and donations are not in any way connected to any particular actions for any particular monied interest.

Lobbyists, nice folks that they are, happily do their part. In the waltz between them and a lawmaker, they can never seem to be leading the dance, offering what might look like a fee for service. During the student loan debate, the Consumer Bank Association handed out a 13-point pamphlet with the dos and don'ts of lobbying, a primer for a group of bankers who'd come to town to chat with their legislators. The 13th point closed with a revealing suggestion: "Another way to express thanks is with a monetary donation at election time. However, such a donation should always be thought of as a thank-you gift, *never* as buying some future political favor."

If you're a legislator, there are also plenty of reasons to be pleasant to your colleagues. Any one of them could enhance your prestige by signing onto a bill you've drafted, or allowing you to join his committee, or providing help in winning a leadership role you want. There's nothing inherently wrong with what is often little more than simple human decency, but in Congress, as elsewhere in town, simple decency can have dire consequences.

What gets lost in all this fellow-feeling is a role so slighted by lawmakers that few people even realize it's part of their job—namely, overseeing the bureaucracy. Performing tough oversight is a way to lose friends fast. If you're a member of the House Education and Labor Committee and you learn that $53 million is being spent on some useless pilot program in Colorado, you face a quandary. Blowing the whistle could save Americans everywhere some money, but it runs the risk of infuriating Rep. Tentermer from that Denver district where the program runs, a program Tentermer proudly unveiled at a news conference last year. Ending that program would embarrass your distinguished colleague; worse, it would put him in a less than sympathetic mood when you next go looking for allies for programs and bills that *you* think are worthwhile. And anyway, you like Tentermer.

And what if you're one of the 40 percent of congressmen who come back to lobby the Hill once you leave? The more friends you had while in office, the more clients you can help. Letting the Denver program slide by means keeping up a friendship that, sooner or later, could be extremely valuable. Again, the price of upsetting business as usual is high, and its benefits—in terms of survival, in terms of staying in Washington—hard to see.

Hence, the relationship between Congress and agencies is rarely adversarial; in fact, the two usually get on with symbiotic smoothness. For legislators, being friendly with top-level bureaucrats is good politics. If, for instance, you're from Wisconsin, a big milk-producing state, it behooves you to angle for a spot on the Agriculture Committee and then hob nob the agency's top of-

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ficials. That way, when the dairy farmers (or their PAC) come to town with a problem, you know exactly who can solve it. Those officials will be happy to oblige. Even though many of them are tenured, Congress can cut their budget, a move which could either end promotion pay raises or compel the agency to fire staffers. This fear has the effect of forcing bureaucrats to be receptive to lobbyists and businessmen, any of whom could go to a legislator and register a complaint.

Niceness bedevils the bureaucracy in other ways. Much of the agencies' work these days is overseeing private contractors—close to 90 percent of the Department of Energy's business, for instance, is farmed out. But minus rigor and real competition for the contract every few years, private firms naturally tend to cut corners to enhance their bottom line. For many bureaucrats, however, playing the heavy isn't easy because often the people they're supposed to lean on work alongside them, become their friends, and could offer them a job someday. "You develop a cozy relationship because they're sitting right next to you," says Carolyn Ban, a former manager at the Department of Personnel and Management. "In a sense you want to have good working relations. But there can be great harm when that leads to a bias for the contractor for the wrong reasons, like wanting to feather your nest."

This problem is most acute where the money in the private sector is most abundant: the Department of Defense. Pentagon bureaucrats are tasked with ensuring that weapons systems get built on time, and, ideally, function as advertised. But for the military's overseers there is a temptation. The private companies that make weapons are constantly looking for a few good men—Pentagon officials who know "the Building" and can help business with the right contacts in the military. Defense contractors frequently can offer double the government's money, so it's not unusual for milicrats to marshal a program through the DoD and Congress and then join the staff of the program's defense contractor shortly thereafter.

"It's become an accepted career path in the Pentagon," says Jim Burton, a retired Air Force colonel and author of *The Pentagon Wars*. "If you have been supportive of a program, you can almost count on the nice man with the money bags showing up and asking you to join the company."

That's what happened in the case of the Maverick missile, an anti-tank weapon purchased by the Air Force in the early eighties. If there had been an honest evaluation of the Maverick, it would never have been built. But thanks to some helpful program managers in the Pentagon, several of the operational tests meant to determine whether the missile would work were rigged. (The missile failed real tests, mistaking, at one point, a franks and beans cookout in the desert for a tank.) Nonetheless, thousands of Mavericks were built at a cost of $123,000 per copy. Less than six months after the missile cleared its last production hurdle, three of the top Pentagon officials responsible for the program left to join Hughes Aircraft Company, the company that built it.

The town's nice ethos isn't well known to Beltway outsiders because the business of survival networking is almost always private; it happens on the phone, in lunches, at meetings, fundraisers, social gatherings on junkets, and at dinner parties. For a sense of how it dims the brightest of reforming spirits, let's follow one man's Washington-style transformation from progressive lawmaker to big-dollar rainmaker.

Toby Moffet arrived in D.C. at the tender age of 30 as a representative from Connecticut, part of the crusading class of 1974. He was one of the higher-profile "Watergate babies," a group of young legislators who had won their seats by running against the Beltway in the wake of Richard Nixon's resignation. A former Nader protégé, Moffet's politics as a congressman were unabashedly progressive, especially on energy issues. But he was affable, hard-working, and continued his predecessors' emphasis on strong constituent service. His colleagues in Washington as well as his constituents at home liked him. He handily won reelection three times.

When Moffet twice sought a wider stage, however, he twice came up short, losing in bids for the Senate in '82 and the governor's job in '86. He worked in local television for a while, and ran and lost two more races. Then the Fox network offered him the leading role in a pilot show which featured Moffet surprising local heroes and community activists with checks for up to $25,000. They shot six episodes, but Fox never aired any of them. In 1992, the pilot was shelved and Moffet was unemployed.

He found work in a place that few familiar

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with his political career would ever have imagined: a Washington lobbying outfit. Today, he runs what is genteelly called the "consulting" arm of a well-established law firm in town, a blue chip mouthful called Wunder, Diefenderfer, Cannon & Thelen. Now 50 years old, Moffet's thatch of dark hair is gray on the sides, but he is still bounding with energy and he retains the warm, easy manner that made him popular even among Republicans in Connecticut. Sitting in the conference room at Wunder, Diefenderfer, his tie loosened and a cup of coffee in one hand, he candidly explained how a man who started off as a Nader Raider and anti-Washington politician has ended up earning six figures in the cradle of the capital's establishment.

"When the Fox pilot was dropped, I was out of money and still paying off debts from the '86 campaign in a Connecticut economy that was going down the tubes fast. So I said to my wife, 'We're out of here.' She said, 'What do you mean?' I said 'We're moving to Washington. That's a town where I know the most people, I know how to do things, I know how to solve problems.'"

Fortunately for Moffet, many of his old Washington friends were now working "downtown," D.C.'s influence- and access-peddling zone, and they were happy to meet him again. One pal, Vickie Reggie—now Vickie Kennedy, Teddy's wife—threw a dinner party on Moffet's behalf and invited a Who's Who of the city's best-connected Democrat lobbyists. The next day, Moffet went to talk business with the previous evening's dinner guests.

"I saw Steve Engleberg, who was Ferraro's person, and I had known in Mondale's office back in those years. Then I had a two-hour session with Howard Paster [who soon would become Clinton's congressional liaison and then leave after a year for a top job at Hill & Knowlton]. Howard has always been a pal from the days he was lobbying for the United Auto Workers and I was on the Hill, and he was just fabulous, telling me, 'Here's what you have to do.' Then I had a good session with Frank [Mankiewicz, whom Moffet knew through his work on behalf of Ted Kennedy's bid for president in 1980] and he had me sit with Gary Hummel who was over there who I knew from Tip O'Neill days. And I had a good session with Anne [Wexler, whom Moffet knew from Connecticut politics]. Anyway, they said 'Come over and be a consultant.'"

He signed up at the Wexler Group. He didn't have to work on any issues that he found unsavory, and in fact passed on a chance to lobby an energy-related bill about which he and Wexler disagreed. His only real complaint, in fact, was the money—chiefly that he wasn't paid enough of it.

"At Wexler, I'd make a phone call to a particular member, directly, maybe, at home let's say, on a critical thing and get some feedback or information that's worth millions of dollars to somebody and they say, 'OK, fine, you can bill us two hours at $300 an hour.' It didn't take long to figure out that I needed to be my own boss and price things the way I wanted to price them."

Moffet soon left for Wunder, Diefenderfer and today his major clients include the government of Angola, Coopers & Lybrand, and the big six accounting firms. He keeps his hand in progressive issues by working with a group fighting to keep Disney's America theme park out of Virginia, and has several pro bono clients.

For anyone who thinks that plying connections must be humiliating work, Moffet's experience is corrective. Often he doesn't need to say anything to former colleagues, let alone supplicate before them. Another dinner party demonstrates why. Shortly after the '92 elections, Moffet invited a table full of buddies who'd just lost campaigns, including Tom Downey, Pete Kostemeyer, and Les AuCoin, who had just been edged out by Bob Packwood.

"We started with four bottles of wine, and I cooked some pasta and these were not big drinkers, but after about three hours I was borrowing wine from my neighbors, they were drinking so much. And Les AuCoin, he was trying to decide what he was going to do, and he said, 'I don't know how you do what you do, I just can't imagine doing it,' you know, lobbying members. I said, 'Well, I don't know, I don't do anything I don't want to do.' And he said, 'You've never lobbied me, I guess.' I said, 'Excuse me? You know this British Columbia timber issue?' He said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'The one where we have all the environmental groups on our side?' He said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'You're the champion, right? Well, *That's my client.*' He said, 'I didn't even know you were involved.' I said,

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'That's right. I never talk to you about it because you're doing the right thing and I'm working with your staff and they know that I know you.'"

Moffet's journey from firebrand to the ranks of the well-heeled is not unusual, though his voyage covered more ideological ground than most. "Frankly, my views have been shaped as I've gone along. I have a much better appreciation for how markets work and market-driven forces as opposed to regulatory." But he also realizes that his approach as a legislator would be a liability now. "When I was a congressman, I was an advocate. We fought the utility companies, and that was the right thing to do. But the style of the advocate doesn't work here."

It's a lesson Moffet learned later than most. What "works here" is largely prescribed by what allows people to stick around and make money, and for the city's players, sticking around and making money requires a sense of team spirit. Once you appreciate how this leads to inane policy, missiles that don't work, and an insider culture that bends even those who came to town promising change, you get a sense of why Washington's niceness should be better known. Little of what goes wrong here can be attributed to wicked people doing evil. Far more often, it's nice people doing well. □

The Washington Monthly

JOURNALISM AWARD

For May 1994
Is Presented to
Diane Sawyer and Robbie Gordon,
PrimeTime Live

Helene Lewis had four pap smears taken in eight years to check for cervical cancer, and each one came back normal. But each one was wrong. *PrimeTime Live*'s undercover investigation of cervical cancer screening labs reveals how poor training of technicians, outdated equipment, and a salary system that rewards speed above accuracy contribute to the high error rate that cost Lewis and many others their lives. When *PrimeTime Live* sent one lab a batch of pre-examined slides for inspection, the lab misidentified 70 percent of cancerous slides as normal. Pap smears can be invaluable help in identifying the early stages of cervical cancer, when it is easily treatable. Sawyer's on-target investigation shows that a woman's first line of defense is in desperate need of reinforcement.

For June 1994
Is Presented to
Thomas Omestad,
Foreign Affairs

When handling a volatile foreign leader, how does the president know how to walk the tightrope between toughness and provocation? Unfortunately, he relies on the C.I.A.'s psychological profiles, exercises in cocktail-party psychology jigsawed together with incomplete and often dubious information. The agency's most public fiasco came from its assessment that Haiti's president-in-exile, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, suffered from a history of mental illness. Their sources, it turns out, were Aristide's opponents in the military who now rule in his absence. Omestad warns that the stakes are far greater when it comes to Kim Jong Il, the new dictator of North Korea. "The C.I.A.'s record on that point is not encouraging," he writes. "And in a crisis that threatens war, flawed profiles could lead to deadly miscalculation."

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in July will close September 15. The winner will be announced in the October issue.

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What the Jury Doesn't Know... Could Hurt You

Right now, juries can't be told about a defendant's prior record. It's time to change that

BY NEWTON N. MINOW AND FRED H. CATE

The moment the Los Angeles Police Department announced that it had issued a warrant for O.J. Simpson's arrest, Americans began playing juror. Spontaneous juries sprang up around coffee machines, on barstools, and in grocery lines everywhere. Scrutinizing the evidence supplied by the media, people began to ask themselves the questions jurors ask: How credible is Simpson's alibi? What does it mean that they can't find the murder weapon? How did the bloody glove end up in Simpson's yard?

In this blizzard of detail, one piece of evidence inevitably held more weight than all the others: Simpson was a wife-abuser. On eight occasions in past years, the public was told, police had been called to the Simpson household to investigate charges of domestic violence, and the one time Simpson was arrested, he was convicted. Followers of the case got a gruesomely intimate portrait of the Simpsons' relationship when police released the transcript of a 911 call Nicole Brown Simpson made as her ex-husband raged at the door of her house. In the country's midsummer obsession with O.J., this history of violence didn't prove his guilt, but it did show that he was a violent man, capable of much more than his movie star good looks and mile-wide smile might suggest.

Experts say if Simpson did indeed commit the murders, the case would be more typical than you might think. Three out of 10 murdered women are killed by their husbands or boyfriends, and more often than not, the murder comes after months and years of increasingly violent abuse. You would think that Simpson's past record would play a significant role in the prosecution's case.

But you would be wrong. In Judge Ito's California court, where Simpson will be tried, and in virtually every other court in the country, a defendant's criminal record is inadmissible as evidence. Any peep about Simpson's history from the prosecutor could force the judge to declare a mistrial and send the whole process back to square one. Moreover, any potential juror who has prior

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knowledge of Simpson's record will be excused from the case. The reason is not that such information is thought to be beside the point. In fact, in 1948, Justice Jackson wrote for the Supreme Court that evidence about defendants' character, including prior convictions, is "not rejected because character is irrelevant; on the contrary, it is said to weigh too much with the jury. . . ." But what's wrong with that? It's time to let juries know exactly who they are dealing with, and that means taking the common-sense step of putting defendants' past brushes with the law on the table.

Today, a jury may learn of a defendant's past convictions under some limited circumstances: If the defendant himself testifies and the information is used to impeach his credibility, or if it is introduced for one of several other narrow purposes permitted by state law. Ironically, the jurors may also be told about past convictions if the defendant wants them to know. For example, some lawmakers worry that a defendant in a state with a "three strikes, you're out" law might introduce his own prior convictions to deter a sympathetic jury from convicting him for a third time, thereby sending him to jail for life.

When jurors know the entire picture, they do place an emphasis on criminal records. In a study conducted by leading jury researchers Valerie Hans and Anthony Doob, 30 simulated juries were asked to decide a hypothetical burglary case: A woman's house was broken into and $200 was stolen. A short time later, a man was found in the neighborhood with $200 in his glove compartment. The defendant's girlfriend, however, testified in court that she was with him at the time the crime occurred. Half were told of the defendant's criminal record, which included several burglary convictions, and half were not. Of the panels left in the dark, not one convicted. But among the better informed juries, the conviction rate was nearly one-half.

Proponents of withholding criminal records from jurors argue that a record is irrelevant. Just because a person robbed one bank doesn't mean he robbed a second. This is true enough, but to say that the information is useless ignores the conclusion of many criminologists that someone who is convicted of a crime is very, very likely to commit a second. According to a 1991 Justice Department study, over 60 percent of criminals released from prison will be rearrested for a felony or a serious misdemeanor. Even that high a rate is dwarfed by the recidivism rates of certain kinds of criminals, such as sex offenders. And those are only the ones who get caught. Unfortunately, courtroom procedure swerves away from this point where science and common sense agree, sometimes with tragic consequences.

Take the 1992 case of Colin James Evans, the proprietor of a child-care center for impoverished children in England, who was charged with child molestation. Molestation is a notoriously difficult crime to prove, and most cases come down to whom the jury trusts more, the child (or the child's parents) or the defendant. The defense argued that Evans was in fact a good-hearted man who chose his profession because he cared for the welfare of children. Why would he harm them? England is one of the only countries in Europe with the same restrictions on evidence as our own. Consequently, the jury did not know that Evans had already been convicted several times of the same crime. As a result of their ignorance, the jury acquitted Evans. Not long afterward, he struck again—only this time he killed the boy after molesting him.

The Jury Is Out. . . Of The Loop

Letting jurors in on a defendant's past is not as revolutionary an idea as it might seem. Already, despite concern about the highly prejudicial effect and relevance of criminal records, most states permit judges, but not juries, to be told about defendants' and witnesses' prior convictions, arrests, and even mere accusations of wrongdoing. When the judge is deciding a case without a jury, the law shows greater confidence in the judge's ability to separate relevance from prejudice. It is only juries that are thought unable to make the distinction.

Juries were not always treated with such lack

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of respect. When first established in this country, the jury was viewed as an active participant in the trial, knowledgeable about the parties and facts involved in the case. It represented the common sense of its community. Beginning in the late 19th century, however, many courts adopted the view that juries were blank slates, to be written on by judges and attorneys. Juries increasingly became observers rather than participants.

This view is more prevalent today than ever before. Attorneys hire jury consultants and test their well-rehearsed cases in focus groups, trying to determine exactly what mix of jurors will make the most favorable audience. Would-be jurors are summoned, often by the thousands in high-profile cases, and questioned about their families, jobs, hobbies, even their religious beliefs. In the case of two men accused of beating truck driver Reginald Denny during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the judge required potential jurors to complete a 45-page questionnaire containing 116 questions. The defendants knew more about the jury than the jury knew about the defendants.

To say criminal records are useless ignores the conclusion of many criminologists that someone who is convicted of a crime is very, very likely to commit a second. Unfortunately, courtroom procedure swerves away from where science and common sense agree, sometimes with tragic consequences.

We must stop denying jurors the facts necessary to make informed decisions. The goal must be to give jurors all the relevant information and trust their ability to come to the right decision. With restrictions on what information the jury can hear, this is at times impossible, and jurors' frustrations are evident. In a 1992 Virginia case involving a woman charged with drunk driving, one juror, Yvonne Zecca, reported that although a majority of jurors felt the defendant was guilty, the panel voted to acquit due to a lack of evidence. After the foreman had delivered the verdict, the bailiff told the jurors that the defendant had been arrested previously for drunk driving and was facing trial on a separate charge of refusing to take a breathalyzer test. "I was outraged," Zecca said. "It was a waste of time to go through the whole charade of a trial but not tell the jury all of the relevant information."

Courts should eliminate the rules that keep such information from the jury. We rely on juries to decide guilt or innocence. We rely on them to decide extraordinarily complicated and technical civil suits. We rely on juries to evaluate the relevance and significance of evidence. We rely on juries to follow judges' instructions to "forget" what they have read or seen in the media or what they have just heard in the courtroom.

Why do we believe juries are capable of performing all of these tasks, but are not able to evaluate evidence about defendants' past conduct? If such evidence is inherently too prejudicial for such rational scrutiny, then why do we give it to judges? If we just don't trust juries, then we must rethink our dependence on them to decide guilt or innocence and to sentence convicted criminals—even, in capital cases, to take their lives. In short, either we have faith in the system of a jury of one's peers or we don't.

Fortunately, in some states, change is underway. California voters passed a "Rights to Truth in Evidence" proposition amending the state constitution to permit juries to have access to information about defendants' character and criminal records. And this spring, Virginia enacted a law allowing jurors to consider a defendant's criminal history, including any crimes committed as a juvenile, before they vote to sentence.

These are important and long overdue moves. Blind justice is not served by a blindfolded jury. What the jury doesn't know can hurt us all. □

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Guerrillas in the Mist

Rwanda's civil war might not have taken us off guard if the American media had spent more time worrying about people—and less about gorillas

BY KEN SILVERSTEIN

With the end of the Cold War, Africa's difficulties are now largely a depressing distraction. That means that barring brutal warfare, a natural disaster, or widespread famine, the continent rarely registers on the American media's radar screen. And even when those kinds of calamities occur, news reports often willfully ignore the human dimensions to focus on whatever impact the disaster might have on a topic that interests Americans.

This was absurdly true in the case of coverage of the fighting and dying in Rwanda over the last few years. Now that the human misery, disease, and death in that country are of an incalculable scale, attention *is* centered on the Rwandans. But for a long time, the media's coverage of the civil war in that country slighted human beings and focused almost entirely on a cuddlier subject: Dian Fossey's apes.

Warfare broke out in Rwanda in late 1990, when the now triumphant guerrillas of the largely Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded the country from neighboring Uganda. Their goal was to topple Juvenal Habyarimana's repressive Hutu-dominated government, which was installed in a 1973 military coup. American journalists were largely unmoved by the dramatic events taking place in the country. Between January of 1991 and December of 1993, a few months before the recent upsurge in violence, *The New York Times* ran 10 stories on Rwanda, half of them brief wire service dispatches. *The Washington Post* didn't have a single story on Rwanda during that period, while *The Wall Street Journal* ran a grand total of four sentences in three one-paragraph filler items.

However, the press has rigorously covered the saga of Rwanda's endangered mountain apes, which were made famous in *Gorillas in the Mist,* the 1988 movie starring Sigourney Weaver as Fossey, the murdered American researcher. A mid-June Nexis search which cross-referenced Rwanda with "gorillas" vs. "guerrillas" resulted in a rout by the apes, 1,123 to 138. And 91 of the references to the humans had come since April 6, when the downing of Habyarimana's plane outside Kigali touched off the terrible crisis that has since been in the headlines.

The clearest way to demonstrate the press' ape

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obsession is to compare events in Rwanda during the 1991 to 1993 period with the coverage of the country that was provided by American newspapers.

Events, 1991: George Bush increased U.S. aid to Rwanda to $15 million, up from $9 million the previous year. Habyarimana's government received far more important support from France, which deployed combat troops to Rwanda after war with the RPF began. According to journalist Frank Smyth, the French also rushed in advisers, helicopter parts, mortars, and munitions.

The war led to increased human rights violations. "Dozens of members of the minority Tutsi ethnic group, including possible prisoners of conscience, were detained," says Amnesty International's annual report for 1991. "There were reports of torture and 'disappearances.' Hundreds of extra-judicial executions by members of the security forces and vigilante groups were reported."

Seeking to defuse the crisis, Habyarimana announced a series of political reforms. In mid-year, the constitution was amended to replace the existing one-party state with a multi-party system. Nine new political parties formed in anticipation of elections scheduled for 1992.

***Press coverage*:** Despite the outbreak of warfare, journalists early in the year emitted hopeful signs about Rwanda's future. The cause for optimism was that scientists had reported an increase in the population of mountain gorillas to 306, up from 242 in 1981.

A brief January 20 dispatch in the *Orlando Sentinel Tribune* said conservationists were "heartened by the most recent census of mountain gorillas, the animals slain scientist Dian Fossey tried to protect." The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported on the encouraging trend on April 17, when a renowned ape researcher mentioned it during a lecture at a local university. Possibly because editors felt the country's story was hopelessly complicated, neither of these articles mentioned that there was a war taking place in Rwanda.

Optimism turned to gloom in mid-year, as spreading warfare was deemed a threat to Rwanda's apes. "Observers fear the gunfire is disrupting [the gorillas'] routine and threatening [their] long-term welfare," cautioned a May 26, 1991, story in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution.* In the one ray of hope, the newspaper said that while the insurgency had brought an end to tourist activities at Rwanda's Kagera National Park, "gorilla tours still are available where the park enters into Zaire."

Events, 1992: Casualties mounted with human rights groups reporting roughly 2,000 civilians killed in the fighting and hundreds of others raped or tortured. In one particularly bloody incident, 150 Tutsi were killed and many other injured during a March attack by pro-government groups of armed Hutu. Western weaponry poured in, mostly from France but including $2.3 million in arms bought from the United States. Mass demonstrations early in the year led Habyarimana to appoint opposition leader Dismas Nsengiyaremye as Prime Minister. The latter's national unity government was shaken in November when Justice Minister Stanislas Mbonampeka resigned his post, citing a lack of cooperation from security forces.

***Press coverage*:** Anguish reached fever pitch in mid-year, when a male silverback known as Mrithi, Weaver's co-star in *Gorillas in the Mist*, became the first ape casualty of the war (apparently the accidental victim of an edgy military patrol).

In a lengthy report on May 28, *The Chicago Tribune* lauded the victim as "a magnificent, gentle animal with many human characteristics." A *New York Times* story the following day also mourned the passing of Mrithi, "the leader of a family of rare mountain apes that Western tourists spend thousands of dollars to view close up." *The Christian Science Monitor* ran an 800-word obituary on Mrithi, lamenting that the "needless snuffing of [the ape's] short, noble life leaves a void we will not soon see filled."

The year's only major story on the war in Rwanda and the country's complicated political scene was a December 13 *New York Times Magazine* piece. Still, it's hard not to wonder if the *Times* would have commissioned the article if not for the fact that its author—Alex Shoumatoff, who is married to a Tutsi—focused on his struggle to save his in-laws from the fighting by bringing them to the United States.

Events, 1993: It was another bad year for human rights. The UN Special Rapporteur visited in April and reported that government forces had murdered some 2,300 civilians since the conflict with the RPF erupted in 1990. The rebel army was reportedly responsible for the arbitrary killing of up to 300 civilians during 1993. In December, rights activist

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Monique Mujawamariya—who last April barely escaped being murdered by government soldiers—visited Bill Clinton in the White House.

Press coverage: More stories on life in the gorilla zone. *The New York Times* ran a May 17 op-ed piece—its only such offering on Rwanda between 1991 and 1993—warning that Dian Fossey's former gorilla camp, smack in the center of a combat zone, was badly imperiled. With a passion unmatched in any journalistic account about the human suffering of Rwanda's war, Rutgers anthropology professor H. Dieter Steklis bitterly charged that protecting the apes was "not high on the world's agenda of problems to solve." "There is not one gorilla to spare," proclaimed the anthropologist, who suggested that the UN take action "to buffer the gorillas from the dangerous instability of national politics."

The grave threat to Fossey's camp was also the subject of stories in *Newsweek* and *The Houston Chronicle*. The lengthy, angry story in the latter, written by Scripps Howard's Joseph Verrengia, said that the remote compound had suffered significant damage during recent combat—damage which had left scientists "sputtering with rage" and "moved to tears."

Verrengia mentioned the war's human toll only in writing that "the hunger and desperation of a million war refugees" had made Rwanda a less "enticing place for visiting scientists to work." Just as tragically, the war had "ruined the eco-tourism trade that made gorilla sightseeing. . . one of Rwanda's leading sources of overseas income."

A May 20 Reuters story echoed this sense of priorities. The report led with the news that 36 apes had been reported AWOL from the Virunga mountain region following an RPF offensive. The gorillas were also "threatened by land mines planted in the. . . civil war," said the story's author, who casually noted near the bottom of the article that "the conflict has made more than 350,000 people homeless and ruined the lives of close to one million."

Even when press coverage changed this summer, journalists badly bungled the story. The most egregious example was reporters' routine portrayal of the conflict in Rwanda as simply an explosion of senseless tribal violence between the Hutu and the Tutsi. The political context of the fighting—a hardline group of Hutu officials seeking to jettison a power-sharing agreement that would have included Tutsi and pro-democracy Hutu parties—was generally ignored. The media also largely overlooked the Clinton administration's *laissez faire* approach to the crisis, most shamefully in its May 16 decision to prevent UN intervention in Rwanda. In another cynical move, the administration in mid-June instructed officials to abstain from using the word genocide when discussing the killings in Rwanda, though, with up to 400,000 people murdered by that time, almost all Tutsi, that's precisely what was taking place.

The Origin of Specism: America's media darlings, Dian Fossey's gorillas.

Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund

Clinton feared that the use of the word might fan public passions and increase pressure on his government to stop the carnage. "Some American officials acknowledge that the administration's posture lacks candor," said *The New York Times*. "But many argue that the land-locked African nation has no ties to the U.S. and no oil or other resources that would make American intervention worth the cost."

That same type of logic also helps explain why the press, until a few months ago, treated Rwanda as merely the "Home of the Mountain Gorillas." □

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Tidbits & Outrages

"AND THAT PART ABOUT THEM EXCHANGING BLONDES' PHONE NUMBERS DIDN'T HAPPEN EITHER"

The New York Times recently ran the following correction: "A picture caption yesterday about an encounter between President Clinton and Senator Edward M. Kennedy described the conversation incorrectly. Referring to a health care bill Mr. Kennedy has proposed, Mr. Clinton said, 'You've got a great bill there.' They did not engage in 'horse-trading.'"

THEY'RE ALSO RETHINKING THAT AL COWLINGS DRIVER'S ED VIDEO

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that shortly after O.J. Simpson was charged with murder, Simpson was hastily cut out of an educational film on goodness and morality.

"FOR ONE THING, WE'LL NEED A BETTER SECRET HANDSHAKE"

In a policy address made in the wake of the Aldrich Ames scandal, C.I.A. director R. James Woolsey promised to change the agency's "fraternity" atmosphere.

"AND THE SLAUGHTERED WILL HENCEFORTH BE REFERRED TO AS THE 'EXISTENTIALLY CHALLENGED'"

The Clinton administration instructed its spokesmen not to describe the mass killings in Rwanda as "genocide."

SURGEON GENERAL REPORTS LONG-TERM EXPOSURE TO G-FORCES CAUSES BRAIN DAMAGE

Defense News reports that Air Force Colonel John Warden, the commandant of one of the Air Force's most prestigious training schools for senior officers and a key architect of the Gulf War air campaign, recently suggested a new post-Cold War mission for the B-2 Stealth bomber. The billion-dollar-a-copy plane could be used, he said, to "carpet bomb famine areas with food pellets."

THE END IS NEAR

St. Martin's Press recently published *Knitting With Dog Hair: A Warp-to-Woof Guide to Making Scarves, Sweaters, Mittens, and Much More.*

—Scott Shuger

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The Right Three Strikes

The season's favorite get-tough solution to crime makes a lot of sense—once legislators learn to distinguish between violent and non-violent offenders

BY DANIEL FRANKLIN

On October 1, 1993, Richard Allen Davis broke into the suburban Petaluma, California home where 12-year-old Polly Klaas was having a slumber party with two of her friends. While Polly's mother slept in the next room, Davis tied up the girls at knife point, and kidnapped Polly. After an agonizing two-month search that drew international attention, police found the girl's body in a ditch only 35 miles from her home. She had been strangled to death.

There was no explanation, no apparent motive. But what made the crime most frightening, what made this nightmare-come-to-life resonate so powerfully throughout the country, was that it seemed there was no longer anywhere to go to escape the violence. Predatory crime had moved to the suburbs.

When his daughter's body was found, Marc Klaas thanked the country for its concern and said he took comfort in the fact that Polly had become "America's child." Davis, then, became the man who killed America's child, and he had a profile worthy of the distinction. The 39-year-old had been arrested 17 times, including three times for kidnapping and sexual abuse. His history of violence stretched back to his adolescence, when he would set cats on fire for fun. "Because of the obvious threat to the community," his probation officer wrote in 1977 after an attempted kidnapping conviction, "it is believed there is no alternative but imprisonment." Less than five years later, Davis was paroled. But it took him only a year to be arrested again, this time for burglary and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. This was the pattern of his adult life. Of the 18 years prior to the Polly Klaas murder, Davis had spent 14 behind bars. On his release, it took him an average of less than five months to be rearrested. There could be no better symbol of the spread of violence in America and of the failure of the criminal justice system to stop it.

In response to the country's fear and desperation, politicians began touting "three strikes and you're out" as the solution to the problem of violence. The proposal had been floating around Cali-

Research assistance provided by Phoebe Dean, Liz Greenspan, Celeste Katz, and Rachel Van Dongen.

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fornia for about a year, slowly gaining support, primarily among conservatives. But when proponents of the bill correctly claimed that "three strikes and you're out" would have prevented Polly Klaas' murder, the idea took wing across the country. In Washington state elections last November, for example, 76 percent of voters approved the state's version of "three strikes and you're out." On March 3, the California State Senate approved the bill 29 to 7 in the face of overwhelming public support. State Senator Newton Russel said at the time, "I don't think we have any choice."

It was a feeling many state legislators began to share. In the 11 months since Polly Klaas was abducted from her home, eight states added repeat offender laws and over 20 more are now considering such bills in their legislatures. The new federal crime bill includes "three strikes" as a central way, in the words of Vice President Gore, to put "a huge dent" in violent crime, despite projections that it will affect only 500 federal cases per year. In his State of the Union address, President Clinton also hyped "three strikes," saying it offered the country a way to be "tough and smart" about crime.

But unexpected problems are already cropping up in the states that have "three strikes" laws. Take the case of Steven Drake Gordon, who holds the dubious distinction of being the first person in Sacramento to be prosecuted under "three strikes and you're out." Addicted to drugs and homeless for the past nine years, Gordon had a record typical of small-time crooks: a few charges of drug possession, disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, and two convictions for theft. In 1986, Gordon took $200 out of the cash register of a fast food joint in New York. Five years later, Gordon stole a woman's purse in Sacramento. In neither crime did Gordon act violently in any way.

But on March 8, the morning after Governor Pete Wilson signed "three strikes and you're out" into California law, Gordon stole a wallet that contained $100 from a bicyclist. He had struck out. Under the new law, Gordon, as a three-time felon, faced 25 years to life in prison: roughly three times the sentence a convicted murderer would serve.

Suddenly "three strikes and you're out" didn't look as fail-safe as Californians had thought. Gordon's victim, Karl Alexander, a 34-year-old hotel worker, stated publicly that Gordon's crime didn't merit the harsh sentence. Seven of the jurors who convicted him, who were unaware the crime was Gordon's third strike until they read it in the newspaper, sent letters to the judge saying Gordon deserved to be punished, but not as if he were a murderer.

Gordon got lucky. Sympathetic to the appeals of the victim and the jurors, Judge Peter Smith found a loophole by reducing the classification of Gordon's cash register heist down to a misdemeanor. In a rare act of judicial discretion, Smith sentenced Gordon to four to 10 years in prison.

Many others have not had Gordon's luck. In Seattle, Larry Lee Fisher was recently sentenced to life in prison for his third strike, the theft of $100 from a sandwich shop. Fisher's previous two felonies were thefts of $100 from a pizza parlor, and $390 from his grandfather. Under normal circumstances, Fisher would be sentenced to about two years in prison. Thanks to "three strikes," he will die behind bars. And Fisher and Gordon are typical of what many strike-out victims will look like.

Yet another problem with "three strikes" is how the laws are overcrowding already overcrowded American prisons. The average American prison system already operates at 15.4 percent over capacity. Forty-two state prison systems are under court order to relieve prison overcrowding. The federal system is one of the worst of all, operating at 38 percent over capacity, with all but one of its prisons under court order to reduce their number of inmates. "Three strikes" should further stretch prison rolls. By 2028, California expects to spend $21 billion building additional prisons. But even with the new prisons, California will not be able to adequately house the nearly 300,000 prisoners "three strikes" is expected to affect—which is more than all of Western Europe imprisons today.

Many voters have begun to feel as if they have been hoodwinked, but perhaps none more than Marc Klaas, who has turned the Polly Klaas Foundation against the law it helped establish. In an interview, Klaas said "three strikes" advocates, eager to attach the Klaas name to their cause, understated the bill's reach.

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"The bill was misrepresented to us. Supporters of 'three strikes' came to us right after we got my daughter back and said, 'We can put these people away for life before this kind of thing happens.' It sounded great to us." But as Klaas realized the breadth of California's "three strikes" law, he began to see something he didn't like. "I don't think anyone wants to put these small-time crooks away for life. We intended for the law to nail the Richard Allen Davises, that type of character," Klaas said.

The difference between Davis' crimes and those of Gordon and Fisher are clear. One is an unrepentantly violent man who targets individuals. The others are penny ante crooks out for an easy score. Giving non-violent small-timers the same sentence as someone like Davis is absurd.

On March 8, the day after Governor Pete Wilson signed "three strikes" into California law, Steven Drake Gordon stole a wallet containing $100 from a bicyclist. He had struck out.

The key to crafting truly smart and tough "three strikes and you're out" bills is to remember Polly Klaas, the young girl whose murder got the country thinking about "three strikes" to begin with. So ask yourself: What kind of law would have kept Richard Allen Davis out of her neighborhood? The answer is a law that targets only truly violent criminals who pose the greatest threat to society. Property criminals such as thieves are best left to the discretion of judges. Marking the difference between crimes against property and violence against people separates the good "three strikes" laws from the bad. Virginia, Connecticut, and Florida all ensure that only violent felons will face the full force of the law. But their wisdom is not pandemic. California, Washington, and Wisconsin are among those states that include some property and drug offenses. The federal crime bill requires that the third strike be either violent or drug-related, but the first two counts can be simple property crimes.

As usual, the details that would make "three strikes" an intelligent response to America's problem of violence have been lost in the partisan noise of Washington and state capitals, with liberals and conservatives sticking to their ideological scripts without really thinking about how to make this work. Former Attorney General Edwin Meese, in *The Washington Times,* wrote that "three strikes and you're out" would "materially increase public safety and improve our citizens' confidence in the criminal justice system." In the other corner, Rep. Charles Rangel said: "It's a knee-jerk political response to a very, very serious problem. We ought to see what we can do to keep these people out of jail."

The simplicity of "three strikes and you're out," which liberals attack as shortsighted, betrays the fact that, in some cases, it makes a great deal of sense. Those criminals who prove themselves incorrigible by committing three violent felonies would be sentenced to life in prison without hope of parole. Criminologists and psychiatrists agree that there are sociopaths with no care for the harm they inflict or fear of punishment they might receive. For these people, the Richard Allen Davises of the world, banishment is the only rational solution. Prison cells, though, are a limited commodity. With prison building budgets already shooting through the roof, legislators crafting their "three strikes" laws need to make hard choices about who warrants extended and expensive prison stays, and who does not.

The consequences of indiscriminate sentencing go far beyond the economic. Given the fact of overcrowding, prison officials must make room for every new prisoner by releasing another. The decision to lock one person up means someone else must be released. The logical choice for early release would be the criminal who has no history of violence. Most parole boards try to identify the prisoners who would pose the least threat to society, but sometimes they have no choice but to release violent criminals to make room for the non-violent.

Donald Clark and Kenneth Stinnett were part

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of one such exchange in Florida. Clark was a typical, dime-a-dozen crook. His 15 convictions included an assortment of thefts and forgeries, but no violence of any kind. After being convicted of stealing a rib roast from a grocery store, Clark was sentenced to 12 years in state prison under Florida's repeat offender law. Stinnett, on the other hand, broke into a woman's apartment one afternoon and raped her while holding a screwdriver to her neck. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison. But on the day Clark began his sentence, Stinnett was released after having served only five and a half years. Accompanying Stinnett that day were three other rapists, two killers, and a kidnapper, each granted early parole as a result of the squeeze put on prisons.

Even with the $21 billion of new prisons it expects to build, California will not be able to adequately house the nearly 300,000 prisoners expected to be sentenced under the present "three strikes" law—which is more than all of Western Europe imprisons today.

In this way, "three strikes and you're out" has the potential to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. By keeping non-violent prisoners behind bars for lengthy sentences, more first- and second-time violent offenders will be pushed out on the street, and given the opportunity to strike out.

An immediate way to prevent "three strikes" from replacing violent criminals with non-violent ones behind bars would be to eliminate both federal and state mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug crimes such as possession or setting up a small drug deal between two people. The *Monthly* has long argued that drugs should be legalized, but if criminalization remains the law of the land, then common sense dictates that precious prison space should be devoted not to the occasional user or the small-time dealer (such as the inner-city kid who sells a few drugs on the street corner) but only to big-time dealers. Even sillier than having "three strikes" apply to small-time dealers is having "three-strikes" apply to non-violent addicts who commit larcenies and other crimes to feed their habit. In New York, for example, mandatory sentencing (similar to the worst-case scenario under "three strikes") means such non-violent addicts serve anywhere from two to nine years in prison at a cost to state taxpayers of up to $58,000 per year and comprise one-eighth of the state's prison population. Imprisoning addicted criminals for long sentences, however, shows no effect in preventing recidivism among them or reducing the overall rate of crimes they commit. Overall, treatment shows a higher success rate at a much lower cost. And more importantly, it reserves the prison cells for truly violent criminals—and for the big-time drug dealers.

Some states have shrewdly taken a more direct route to ensure violent offenders don't get early releases. Connecticut, in fact, gives prosecutors the discretion to seek a life sentence if they determine that a two-time violent offender poses a continued threat to society. "The police and prosecutors know who the bad guys are," said State Senator George Jepsen. "We thought it better to give them the opportunity to get violent criminals off the street before they get a chance to strike a third time." Georgia Governor Zell Miller, too, has shown he is not bound by the baseball metaphor, proposing a "two strikes, you're gone" law aimed at truly violent criminals (murderers, armed robbers, aggravated assailants, rapists, etc.) that will be on the Georgia ballot in November. Says Miller, "If you want three strikes in Georgia, you'd better join a baseball team."

Another way some "three strikes" laws do not make sense is in keeping many of those

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convicted under the statutes in prison late into their lives. There is considerable evidence that once someone passes age 65, the likelihood of his breaking the law plummets and the costs of jailing him skyrockets. The average 65-year-old, for example, is as likely to commit a violent crime as a nine-year-old boy, and as he gets older, this probability decreases to nil. Figuring in the increasing costs of health care, keeping an elderly convict in prison past 65 could cost up to $100,000 per year. Several states' and the federal government's "three strikes" laws provide for geriatric release when it becomes clear that an ex-con poses no further threat to society. In fact, one of the few positive aspects of the California law is that it imposes 25-years-to-life sentences, instead of mandatory life without parole. It is important to remember that the primary reason behind "three strikes" is the protection of society from violence. With a few exceptions made for the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes—had they not been executed, we still should have kept Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy behind bars the rest of their lives—mandatory life sentences should be rejected. But once more typical criminals no longer represent a threat of violence, it's an enormous waste of money to keep them locked up, whether they were convicted under "three strikes" or not.

Tightening the proverbial noose around violent criminals' necks requires more safeguards than most "three strikes" laws allow. Judge Peter Smith, who presided over Gordon's trial, displayed the most effective check against unfair sentencing: judicial discretion. Too often in practice, the prosecutor assumes the powers normally held by the judge, leading to mistakes like Fisher. Because the law mandates the sentence, the criminal's punishment entirely depends on whether the prosecutor decides to try the defendant under "three strikes" or not. But all judges should be given the power to do what Smith did. Where statutes remain imperfect, judges should be given wide discretion to overturn sentences imposed by "three strikes" when they are not appropriate.

Such a case occurred in Sonoma County, California. Jeffrey Dean Missamore, already in jail for one year for petty theft (a misdemeanor), was caught in prison with two marijuana joints, which is a felony. Because Missamore had already been convicted in 1986 of another felony the drug possession constituted his second felony strike and mandated imposing twice the normal sentence for the crime. Missamore would have faced a minimum of eight years in prison had not Judge Lawrence Antolini, a self-described conservative, ruled that the sentence violated the Eighth Amendment and sentenced Missamore to probation.

Both Connecticut and Indiana wisely give the final power in sentencing to those who are best qualified to hold it: the judges. If a judge rules that a life sentence is unfairly harsh or unnecessary, he may revert to the sentencing guidelines. If "three strikes" is written with enough specificity, this should happen only rarely, because only the truly violent and unrepentant criminals will be prosecuted under the law.

Unless states and the feds note the shortcomings of the California and Washington laws, they too will begin filling prisons with criminals like Fisher and Gordon. Legislators must get the laws right from the first step. Unlike criminals, they do not have a strike to spare. □

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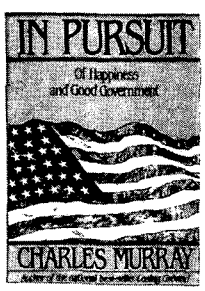

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FEB 02 1994

To: Denny Galvin
Denny Fenn

From: Roger Kennedy

Surely, we must be able to find a use for a Swahili-speaking person who has Peace Corp experience, is a cum laude in English from Harvard and has a biological background in data manipulation. We have such great difficulty expressing ourselves in the biological field that I wonder brother Fenn if you could use a Special Assistant or someone that may help us express ourselves more adequately as science in the parks develops.

Unfortunately, Mr. Trevor is white, which is too bad. Would you let me know if you see any prospects?

cc: John Trevor

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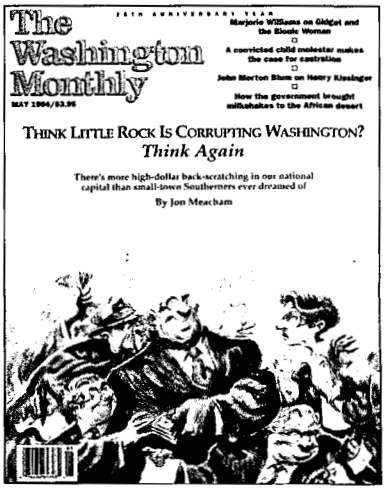

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The GOP's Master Strategist

Meet William Kristol, the brainy operative who's teaching the Republicans how to checkmate Clinton

BY JON MEACHAM

In the summer of 1984, when William Kristol was a young assistant professor at Harvard's Kennedy School, he visited Washington to write about how Reaganites were running the agencies they had so long reviled. Fatefully, Kristol chose William Bennett, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, as one of his subjects. In an article for *Policy Review,* Kristol used the outspoken Bennett to illustrate how a *realpolitik* conservative should operate: ". . . [I]n politics, unlike football, there is no referee who makes sure you have a turn on offense. . . . One implication of this perspective is that the political executive ought not to be afraid of publicity—or controversy."

The point: Politics is a game, and what matters is offense, crushing your opponents, carrying the day. The piece impressed Bennett, who was even more impressed by young Kristol, the son of two prominent intellectuals who had recommended Bennett for the NEH job—Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb. So when Bennett, a master at rhetorically skewering his opponents, moved to the Department of Education, in 1985, he called Bill Kristol and asked if he'd come to work for him. "I knew his DNA pretty well," says Bennett now. "Bill [Kristol] wanted to apply what he had been teaching, and that was what I had wanted to do, too."

Once in the capital, Kristol rose rapidly through the GOP ranks, becoming Bennett's chief of staff and, later, "Dan Quayle's Brain" (as *The New Republic* dubbed him in 1990). In both jobs, he quickly shed any academic reserve and executed famous conservative blitzes—with Bennett, against the education establishment; with Quayle, against "the cultural elite"; and, with both, against supposed enemies of family values, including the media, Hollywood, and liberals in general. Today, as head of a small think tank called the Project for the Republican Future, Kristol has expanded his brief and is masterminding nothing less than the GOP opposition to Clinton and the Democrats. "Bill really loves the stimulation of Washington—all the phone calls, all the maneuvering, the

Research assistance provided by Phoebe Dean.

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latest bit," says Kenneth Adelman, a Reagan arms control director and friend of Kristol's. "He loves the operational game."

There's no more important player in that game right now than Kristol. "He's the most learned and intelligent political advocate the Republicans have had in a long, long time," says R. Emmett Tyrrell, editor of *The American Spectator.* Mississippi Senator Trent Lott observes: "Kristol's always pushing the envelope, keeping Republicans focused on what's possible if we stick to our line." Adds Linda Chavez, a conservative columnist and former Reagan official: "He's the only game in town in terms of ideas."

To understand why Washington is so sharply divided on major issues, left, right, and center—why, for example, no Republicans voted for the president's budget in 1993 and why so few are even slightly inclined to cooperate on significant health care and welfare reform—it is essential to understand Kristol, the party's leading in-house strategic thinker.

Kristol's power comes from an understanding that in politics, what you *say* matters as much if not more than what you actually *do.* One May Sunday in 1993, for example, Kristol was a guest on CBS' "Face the Nation" and weighed in on the prospects for the Clinton economic plan. The next day, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a story on the plan, quoting the titans of the Democratic party—Bentsen, Panetta, Mitchell, Rostenkowski. The only opposition voice in the piece was Kristol's, who had wittily and memorably remarked on the show, "The Clinton budget is like a giant pasture full of sacred cows, cheerfully mooing and contentedly munching at the federal taxpayers' expense." This from a man who served in two GOP administrations that actually asked for *more* money than the Democratic Congress agreed to spend.

But Kristol got his shot in at the president, and nobody's better at taking those anti-Clinton shots than he is. A smart man (no one in Washington since Kissinger is so universally regarded as "brilliant" by friend and foe alike), Kristol's strategic moves are informed by a grasp not only of tactics but of theory. Now 41, he finished Harvard College in three years, carefully studied de Toqueville, and wrote his doctoral dissertation on the philosophical antecedents of the American judicial system, drawing heavily on *The Federalist Papers*—itself a conservative, 18th-century case study, of course, on how to check popular impulses for radical change. Kristol later taught political philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania and at Harvard.

Sitting in his downtown Washington office one July morning, talking about politics and philosophy, Kristol could be conducting an especially interesting seminar: soft-spoken, funny, apt to smile genially at the conclusion of a point. In the span of an hour, he mentions Aristotle, Richard Weaver, the Founding Fathers, and thoughtfully muses about the state of the country. "People aren't happy with the way things are going. Two-thirds of the country think the country is on the wrong track, which is really a

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mind-boggling statistic, though from a partisan point of view I suppose it's good for Republicans," he says. "But it's really worrisome: The country has never been wealthier or more physically secure, and yet people are genuinely unhappy."

But Kristol is not spending his time wondering how to make America a happier place in practice. Instead, he is doing all he can to turn Washington into a place where Democratic ideas are met with monolithic Republican opposition. A political tactician who wants to win, he believes he has to knock out his opponents altogether: "Inevitably," he says, "Republicans in Washington are going to spend most of our time fighting Clinton."

Kristol's effective, reflexive opposition (the only thing Clinton has done to win even a grudging nod from him has been NAFTA) sadly comes at a time when rarely has there been a greater consensus identifying the country's problems: schools, welfare, crime, values. Kristol has the skills—insights, shrewd political instincts, the ability to communicate clearly—to advance any idea or cause he chooses. But instead of seeking common ground with Democrats to produce solutions, Kristol, who is widely touted as the next GOP White House chief of staff, is raising adversarialism to empyrean heights: Defeat the Democrats, no matter what the issue, no matter what the consequences.

Left in Charge

This adversarialism has deep cultural roots, for conservatives have long felt themselves to be outside the mainstream of respectable elite opinion. In the thirties and forties, liberalism was generally thought of as the prevailing philosophy of the thinking classes, and the fault line seemed to run like this: Liberalism was for smart people—the Schlesingers and the Galbraiths—and conservatism was for dumb people—the McCarthys and the Goldwaters. But William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *God and Man at Yale*, in 1951, his founding of *National Review*, in 1955, and the writings of Russell Kirk in the early fifties began to inch conservatism toward intellectual respectability. A second landmark came in the late sixties and early seventies, when men like Kristol's father and Norman Podhoretz—former leftists who moved to the right on defense, foreign policy, and values—founded the neoconservative movement, establishing a conservative beachhead in what Lionel Trilling once called "the adversary culture" of academics, artists, and writers.

Growing up in the house of a neoconservative was Kristol's first formative philosophical experience; the other came at Harvard, where he encountered the teachings of Leo Strauss, the German-born political philosopher who had a long postwar American career at the University of Chicago. Straussianism attracted bright young people like Kristol to conservatism by the mid-seventies—the kind of bright young people who staffed Reagan's Washington. Strong believers in virtue and natural law, Straussians are fundamentally anti-utopian and skeptical of the idea of human progress. "My philosophical background gave me a healthy respect for reality," says Kristol. "Straussianism is very hostile to the notion that we can radically change the world for the better."

Hence Kristol's dark vision of the New Deal/Great Society worlds. He is right to say that many public enterprises fail; so do private ones, a point that conservatives always seem to overlook. And Kristol is certainly wrong in campaigning on the idea that government can't work, period. In the thirties, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority worked; in the late forties and early fifties, the G.I. Bill sent a generation of veterans to college; in the sixties, NASA was superb in getting America to the moon. And just recently, the military in Bush's Persian Gulf War did its job.

To be sure, Kristol does not ignore history altogether. Like his mother, whose studies of Lord Acton and Victorian England, for example, reveal a formidable appreciation of the complexity of human affairs, Kristol knows the world is a complicated place. Still, he has difficulty publicly overcoming his tactical instincts to acknowledge that the other side—in this case, the Democrats—ever has a point. "Conservatives do of course favor an energetic government within its proper sphere," Kristol said in a speech last year. Today, asked directly about what the "proper sphere" is, he says: "What's most striking today is when there's a problem—spouse

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abuse, you name it—right away someone stands up and introduces federal legislation. There is something crazy about politics of this sort. It creates a politics that is so driven by the crisis of the day or of the week that it's awfully hard to have a sensible debate about anything."

A wonderful answer: witty, glib, partly true. There *is* a lot of posturing and nattering on Capitol Hill. But that doesn't tell us what government's "proper sphere" is. Ducking the hard choices about what services should continue and what should be cut, Kristol instead argues for dismantling the federal government as we know it. He proposes term limits for lawmakers, a balanced budget amendment, a flat income tax. Fair enough; they are all ideas that deserve a hearing. But note that these are ideas that don't require taking on any particular interest. The GOP has promised such prairie fires before, including abolishing the Departments of Education and Energy, and never delivered. The real question, then, is whether Republicans have anything beyond Kristol's indisputably clever way with words to recommend their being trusted with government again.

Right Jabs

When Kristol was at Education, for example, he and Bennett did some smart things, including beating back the more extreme aspects of bilingual education and making the right speeches about values. People who were there remember Kristol as an excellent manager and strategic thinker. But for all of Bennett and Kristol's commendable rattling of the cages of the education lobby, what did they actually accomplish in those years? Not a great deal. Even the conservative Heritage Foundation noted, in 1989: "Inside Washington, Bennett accomplished little to make reforms part of the legislative framework. He preferred the bully pulpit to negotiating on the Hill."

Kristol brought the same fondness for strategic style over substance to the Council on Competitiveness, a small body with a staff of eight that worked under Kristol in Quayle's office. Though the Bush administration generally failed to live up to its anti-regulatory rhetoric—it published 35,000 more pages in the Federal Register than Reagan did in his first term—Kristol used the Council to position Quayle as a conservative champion of business interests within the White House. The Council would review major proposed federal regulations (usually at the request of affected industries, which were usually big-dollar GOP donors) and would in turn lobby agencies to soften the proposals.

Access to the Council's lobbying powers was for sale: *The Washington Post* reported that "In almost every city he visits as a campaigner, Quayle holds closed-door roundtables with business people who have made sizable contributions to the local or national GOP." And the Council met in secret, claiming to be like the National Security Council. The difference, of course, is that the National Security Council doesn't solicit problems from paying constituents and then pressure federal agencies to reverse course.

In late 1990, the Council's first victory was to remove a recycling requirement for municipal incinerators. Emboldened by this success, the Council reviewed the EPA's first set of regulations implementing the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, which Bush had enthusiastically signed into law. Quayle's office marked up the proposals with 100 suggested changes, including giving industries the power to unilaterally increase their emissions of pollution without public notice, judicial review, or agency oversight.

There were other cases of interference with regulations intended to provide safe factories and intelligently protect the environment: The Council tried to change the definition of "wetlands" to open more land to development (this after Bush promised "no net loss of wetlands" in 1988); tried to stop OSHA from regulating formaldehyde, a carcinogen; and tried to allow power plants near the Grand Canyon to pollute more than the EPA wanted them to.

Nevertheless, few figures in the Bush administration came out as well as Kristol, who spearheaded the Council. This is because Kristol brought the same strategic skills that he uses to promote the GOP opposition line to promoting himself.

Quayle alumni report that journalists streamed in and out of Kristol's office, and that the chief of staff rarely failed to return reporters' phone calls. He was close to Fred Barnes, whose columns in *The New Republic* frequently argued that the technocratic John Sununu and Dick Dar-

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man were wrecking Bush, and the young conservatives were the president's hope for salvation. (After one especially Kristolian Barnes column, White House staffers joked that "Barnes must be mainlining Kristol this week.") Kristol was also attentive to writers at work on books: Michael Duffy and Dan Goodgame, *Time* correspondents who wrote *Marching in Place*, an unflattering portrait of the static first three Bush years, used Kristol as a source. And John Podhoretz, whose *Hell of a Ride* skewers Bush's "solipsistic presidency," "practically had his headquarters in Kristol's office," recalls one Quayle staffer.

Because Kristol was so close to reporters, people who might criticize him were reluctant to do so; his influence in the White House was based, in part, on the fact that he could always get his spin published or aired. In a July 5, 1992 *New York Times Magazine* profile of Quayle in which Kristol's staff was called "one of the leanest and meanest operations in Washington," the reporter wrote of the mood inside the White House in the spring of 1992: "For months, Quayle and his staff had been on the verge of panic about the Bush decline. From their perspective, the White House, despite major staff changes since the beginning of the year, had let slip a series of opportunities to win back the affection of American voters." And on September 9, Kristol told the *Times*, "I'm much less sure that we deserve to win than that the country doesn't deserve for the Democrats to win."

Needless to say, this kind of candor did not endear Kristol to his West Wing counterparts. "You're heralded as a genius if you admit the obvious, even when admitting the obvious hurts the president," says Ed Rogers, a former Sununu deputy. "People in the White House who have access and information with no responsibility or authority can very often use that position to be unhelpful—but still be called a genius by the press, because all the press wants is controversy." True to form as an unapologetic tactician, Kristol shrugs off the criticism. "I actually regret not being more of a pain-in-the-neck," he says now. How did he get away with it? Kristol was justly credited with keeping Quayle from more disasters ("potatoe," "happy campers") than the vice president got into anyway. As long as Kristol kept Quayle in line—and he usually did—he was too valuable to get rid of.

After the election, the defeated Bush began weighing a pardon for Iran-*contra* figures. At first, the president was interested only in pardoning Caspar Weinberger, but Kristol pushed for more—including a pardon for former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, who is a friend of Kristol's and the son-in-law of Norman Podhoretz, the old neocon ally of Irving Kristol's. "[Bill] Kristol was very helpful on the whole issue of going beyond just Weinberger," recalls C. Boyden Gray, Bush's White House counsel. This has a political implication as well: Abrams and others had been convicted for misleading Congress about the Reagan administration's role in aiding the *contras*; in short, for running a hard-headed, ideologically driven operation. It is the sort of undertaking—the sort of *game*—that Kristol, as a tactician, appreciates. (Kristol, too, had been an architect of the GOP argument that the Walsh prosecution was out of control and leading to "criminalization of policy differences," a strategic line, of course, intended to deflect attention from the crimes that had unquestionably been committed.) On Christmas Eve 1992, Kristol prevailed, and Abrams and others were pardoned.

That essentially marked Kristol's first foray as an out-of-power operator. His next splashiest undertaking—the Project for the Republican Future—is the site of his most striking achievement: creating and sustaining the GOP opposition to health care reform.

Offensive Plays

On December 3 of last year, Kristol faxed a five-page memo, unsubtly entitled "Defeating President Clinton's Health Care Proposal," to Republican offices across the land. Bob Dole read it; so did the rest of the capital, and Senate and House candidates far and wide.

At the time, Republicans were contemplating their own versions of large-scale reform of the nation's troubled system. Long before Clinton, Dole had been talking about a crisis in health care: "Mr. President, yesterday, President Nixon sent to Congress a comprehensive health message," Dole said on the floor of the Senate on February 19, 1971. "This message recognizes the present health care crisis in our nation." On June

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6, 1991, he did it again: "Mr. President, yesterday the Majority Leader, joined by four of his colleagues, announced their solution to certain aspects of the health care crisis confronting this nation. They are to be commended for helping to begin and shape a long overdue debate on access to health care." Today, the problems are even worse: The system costs $1 trillion a year, leaves millions of people out in the cold, and costs are rising so fast that in a few years paying for health care may be untenable.

Kristol, however, urged scorched-earth tactics to defeat reform. "Simple, green-eyeshades criticism of the [Clinton] plan. . . is fine so far as it goes," he wrote. "But in the current climate, such opposition only wins concessions, not surrender. . . . Any Republican urge to negotiate a 'least bad' compromise with the Democrats, and thereby gain momentary public credit for helping the president 'do something' about health care, should also be resisted."

When Gephardt and Mitchell proposed compromise health care measures in late summer, Kristol told Republicans to run out the clock. "At bottom this debate is now a political one," he wrote in a strategy memo on July 26. "*Sight unseen, Republicans should oppose [the new Democratic bills].*"

It was Shermanesque: politics, and policy, as total war. In a subsequent *Wall Street Journal* piece in January, Kristol coined the mantra of GOP opposition: "Passage of the Clinton health care plan *in any form* would be disastrous. . . . There is no health care crisis." Despite the fact that we spend a third more for health care than the next-largest industrialized nation, have a disturbingly high rate of medical inflation, and lag behind other major countries on basic measures of health such as infant mortality, the line caught on. That it worked is a classic example of how Republicans buy off the vast middle class with appealing polemics and short-term fixes.

After bringing Dole (who began 1994 publicly scoffing at Kristol's no-crisis strategy but by midsummer was telephoning Kristol just to stay in touch), Gingrich (a longtime Kristol telephone pal), and others over to his position, Kristol explained how to move the debate entirely his way. "If we are to negotiate with Democrats over health care reform," Kristol wrote in a memo on June 7, "it must be on *our* terms, not theirs."

That prefigured what Dole—the 20-year-old "crisis" he once worried about long forgotten as the Clinton plan sunk in the polls—said at the July 19 meeting of the National Governors Association in Boston, where the president (briefly) abandoned his universal coverage pledge. "The health care system may not be perfect but it is the best in the world," said Dole, parroting Kristol's memos. "It needs repair but I'm not certain it needs a complete and total overhaul and certainly not a complete and total takeover by the federal government." Helpfully, the senator added, "I think the seeds of a bipartisan agreement still exist—if the administration is willing to come our way."

A singular triumph of tactics: the president on the run, appearing to break a fundamental promise, and the Republicans getting credit for saving the country from another damn giveaway program. Problem is, universal health insurance is anything *but* a giveaway program if you understand the problems in the current system.

"Our insight was that to beat Clinton we had to defend the quality of the current system," Kristol says now. He argued that most people, while they have generalized anxieties about health insurance and costs, are pleased with their own care. Since polls indicate that 60 to 80 percent of Americans are worried about things like losing coverage if they change jobs, Kristol

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argued that Republicans should appear to remedy those specific problems and close the deal.

But if this happens, even if you are now well-insured, you lose. Why? Because Kristol's alternative health plan, micro-reforms and repairs to the current system, does nothing to address the central questions driving health care reform: how to control costs and how to achieve universal coverage. The experience of every other major nation that has reformed its health system teaches us the two are intimately connected: That is, to control costs, we need universal coverage. Yet Kristol's provisions—the ones picked up by Dole, Gramm, and others—would only take care of one of the middle class' primary fears: that a private insurer will not insure someone with a pre-existing condition. But if the ranks of the uninsured remain vast, and if doctors and hospitals can continue to charge whatever they can get for services, prices will keep going through the roof (reaching 18 percent of GDP by 1998, if current trends hold). And before long, even moderately affluent people won't be able to afford coverage even if an insurer—in a Kristol-reformed system—will have them.

In spite of its anti-"welfare state" packaging, Kristol's plan whistles government into the game by asking it to regulate the insurance market. Kristol, however, abandoned even this minimal position when Congress was working to get a bill ready for the floors in late summer. When Gephardt and Mitchell proposed compromise measures, Kristol told Republicans to run the clock out. "At bottom this debate is now a political one," he wrote in a strategy memo on July 26. "*Sight unseen, Republicans should oppose [the new Democratic bills].*" (emphasis Kristol's.)

Health care is not the only place Kristol has blocked possible agreement between liberals and conservatives. On June 15, when the president introduced his long-awaited plan "to end welfare as we know it," Gingrich and Kristol were quoted in *The Washington Post*'s news story about the plan. In opposition, of course. Hearing two Republicans denounce a plan to make welfare recipients go to work—long a staple of Reaganite rhetoric—would be mind-boggling if you didn't know that Kristol was behind the gambit, this time with Charles Murray, a leading conservative social expert.

The Kristol hallmarks were clear: A strategy memo appeared, arguing for a no-compromise line. "Republicans should not busy themselves seeking promising signs or areas of possible agreement in the president's plan," Kristol wrote on June 13. "Instead, we should make plain what this welfare proposal amounts to: marginal tinkering. . . . "

Well, no. As Mickey Kaus argues, Clinton's plan is not without its small holes, but there are no black holes. The two-year limit on benefits before you have to go to work only begins at age 18; new mothers get a year extension after the birth of a child; states can excuse 10 percent of their pool for "good cause"; etc., etc. Sure, public employee unions broke Clinton in the drafting process, successfully inserting a clause that prohibits welfare recipients from doing work unionized government workers are already doing. Nevertheless, the limit is there in the Clinton bill—the first serious initiative in a generation to take on welfare directly.

That, in a nutshell, is Kristol's problem. Politically, the Republicans, who have been railing against welfare for 30 years, can't be seen abetting a Democratic president who will be able to say in 1996 that he's putting people on the dole to work. So Kristol, Murray, Gingrich, Bennett, and other Republicans are racing to Clinton's right.

You could argue that this is merely a case of the GOP making a principled stand in opposition. But you would be wrong. Up until Clinton's election, Republicans were all for welfare-to-work; only since then has the GOP mainstream gone over to Murray's new thesis, laid out in a 1993 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed: that the problem driving the underclass is illegitimacy, not welfare. That's where things get tricky. Of course it's true that children born out-of-wedlock are more likely to be poor than legitimate kids, and illegitimate children in welfare homes are even more likely to have a hard time of it. But if conservatives thought illegitimacy, not work, was the real policy problem, then why did they only begin talking about it as central *after* Clinton co-opted the welfare-to-work issue? Because they needed a political trick to trump a smart Democratic president. Despite their basic agreement on how to solve a catastrophic problem—the plight of the underclass—the GOP, sensing a Democratic ad-

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vantage, moved the goalposts.

Of course, Kristol hasn't got much to work with in the way of substantive GOP policy alternatives that aren't close—perilously close, in Kristol's view—to what Clinton and moderate Democrats want. Clinton was elected, remember, after he carefully distanced himself from traditional liberal dogma on these matters. He acknowledges, joining with many conservatives, that schools have to be accountable for performance; that work must be part of welfare reform; that violent crime has to be strongly punished; and that many of our troubles are, at bottom, the result of family breakdown. (Quayle and Kristol had their "Murphy Brown" speech on family values; Clinton had his speech to black ministers in Memphis.)

Rhetorically, then, Kristol is frequently forced back to anti-government shibboleths: "In our day and age, government has become such a problem and is so much too big and so bad for our character that simply cutting government is a pretty good practical program for a while." These arguments would have more force if the Republicans had a record of anti-government action to stand on. But they don't. The federal payroll grew in the eighties; federal spending under Reagan increased 3 percent a year beyond inflation; the number of federal bureaucrats writing regulations in 1992 was 122,000—more than there were at the end of the Carter administration. Nevertheless, sensing political opportunity, Kristol and the Republicans shamelessly batter government.

That's good politics, but it doesn't change anything. There are real problems out in the real world, beyond think tanks and strategy memos. And those problems—bad schools, a growing underclass, increasingly violent crime—undoubtedly require enlightened governance if they are to be solved. And enlightened governance comes not from shrewd political tactics but from a willingness to concede a point here and there. The concession may not win you votes, or the soundbite you want, or the lead quote in Sunday's *New York Times*, but it's what the great men in our history have done to do great things.

It's how, for example, we won World War II and the Cold War. From about 1940 to about 1965, American foreign policy was largely bipartisan, and congressional Republicans, on issues such as Lend Lease and the Marshall Plan, supported FDR, Truman, and Kennedy. In turn, congressional Democrats supported Eisenhower. On the critical foreign matters of that time, there was a prevailing understanding that fascism and communism were problems that had to be confronted, so cooperation was at a premium. And on some major domestic landmarks that shape the way we live now, more Republicans joined in than not. In the years when most Americans thought we ought to abolish segregation and provide health insurance for the elderly, cooperation worked. On the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964, and 1965, for instance, only a handful of Republicans in Congress dissented; in 1965, Medicare passed with more House Republicans voting yes than voting no.

A similar kind of consensus about some domestic problems exists today—again, on schools, welfare, crime, and values. But Kristol ("Inevitably, Republicans in Washington are going to spend most of our time opposing Clinton") constrains solutions, even where he agrees with the president in general. This is because, under the rules of the game Kristol is playing, he wins only when Clinton loses ("Republicans should not busy themselves seeking promising signs or areas of possible agreement in the president's plan.") But what's good for Kristol is not always what's good for the country. That's why opposition for opposition's sake is so ultimately destructive.

Asked where he might cooperate with Clinton, Kristol says, "To the degree to which Clinton comes back to the New Democratic message, I would support him. But inevitably I think we would want to go farther and get other things, too." That is, simply, a loss for the Republic. As the welfare example shows, even where real progress is possible, Kristol chooses to use his formidable skills to obstruct clearly needed action.

So the hour of possible cooperation slips away. Meanwhile, Kristol has unabashed visions of this period being like the Carter interregnum, when supply side economics took wing and gave the Reagan forces of 1980 an intellectual veneer. Kristol and his fellow Republicans are playing for cheers, points, and victory. At the end of the day, however, they don't care what the game is really about—all of us—but only that they win. □

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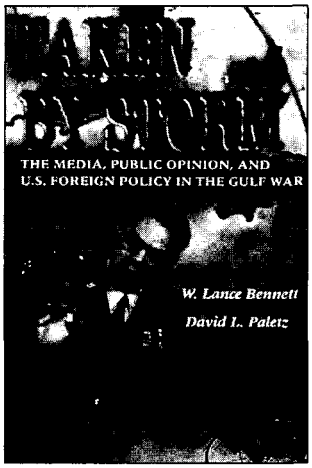
TAKEN BY STORM

The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War

Edited by **W. Lance Bennett** and **David L. Paletz**



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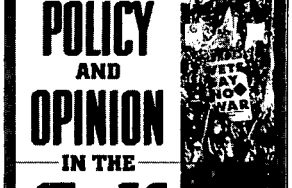

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Who's Who

A top official recently observed that this White House differs from its predecessors in that it has three centers of power in **Bill Clinton**, **Hillary Clinton**, and **Al Gore**. A near fourth has been **George Stephanopoulos**, who is the only staff member to have shared the Big Three's power to stick his nose into any matter he chooses. **Leon Panetta** will soon be a fifth, and may in fact supplant Stephanopoulos, whose star is said to be in decline. . . .

A sure sign that **Panetta** knows how to go about asserting control is the fact that he has taken over all payroll decisions in the White House. . . .

Another sign is that one new measure of power in the West Wing is who attends **Panetta**'s 7:30 a.m. staff meetings. The latest list includes **Stephanopoulos**, **Tony Lake**, **Robert Rubin**, **Mack McLarty**, **Mark Gearan**, **Lloyd Cutler**, **Harold Ickes**, **Carol Rasco**, **Pat Griffin**, **Gore** chief of staff **Jack Quinn**, and **Hillary Clinton**'s chief, **Maggie Williams**. . . .

The possibility of changes in this line-up has got practically everyone in the White House worried, with the greatest anxiety aroused by the question "Will I survive?" followed closely by "Will I have more power, or less?" The key may lie in a study of the White House conducted by **Matthew Miller**, a senior advisor to **Alice Rivlin** and a former McKinsey consultant who some predict will emerge as a major power in the **Panetta** era. Miller's recommendations are so secret that they haven't been written down; he only gives his briefings verbally. . . .

Isn't there just a touch of hypocrisy in the GOP's embrace of family values? **Newt Gingrich** sued his wife of 18 years for divorce after she had one operation for cancer, visited her in the hospital as she recovered from another round of cancer surgery to discuss separation terms, and then failed to keep up his alimony payments until he was sued. And don't forget dear, sweet **Bob Dole**, who married the glamorous **Liddy** after divorcing the wife who had nursed him through his long recovery from war wounds and stood beside him as he rose through Kansas politics to power on the Potomac. . . .

It seems that one of White House aide **Bruce Lindsey**'s duties is to keep the president out of **Paula Jones**-like situations. One example, unearthed by *The Washington Post*'s **Sharon LaFraniere**: When Lindsey found out that **Clinton** had asked **Christy Zechner**, a flight attendant on the campaign plane, to work out with him at the Little Rock YMCA, Lindsey told Zechner not to accept the invitation. . . .

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George's new pad . . . Panetta and the payroll . . . C.I.A. turkey farming . . . Missing Debra . . .

Speaking of **Paula Jones**, it should be noted she has her principles, that there is a standard of delicacy beyond which she will not go, at least on network television. The one condition she insisted on before agreeing to be interviewed by ABC's **Sam Donaldson** was that she not be asked about the "distinguishing characteristic" on Clinton's private parts that is mentioned in the complaint in her lawsuit. . . .

If you doubt that the Republicans are determined to torpedo health reform, Rep. **Fred Grandy** of Iowa tells of getting "marching orders" from **Newt Gingrich** not to offer any constructive amendments that might enlist bipartisan support. "We now have a [GOP] leadership," says Grandy, "that preempts policy with politics." . . .

Why did the Latin American division of the C.I.A. pass **Aldrich Ames** on to the Soviet division without any warning that he had been deemed a "drunkard" and "deadwood" during his tenure in Mexico City? Insiders suspect the motive was not complicity in a communist conspiracy, but good old-fashioned turkey farming, the traditional bureaucratic device for unloading an incompetent without having to endure the painful confrontation of firing. Few bureaucratic skills are more highly prized than the ability to arrange for your turkey to transfer to another division or agency where the results of his ineptitude can no longer be blamed on you. . . .

In the grand tradition of Archer Daniel Midlands' **Dwayne Andreas** and other corporate moguls who share their bounty with both political parties, **General Colin Powell** has given $1,000 each to Democrat **Doug Wilder** and Republican **J. Marshall Coleman**, who are running for the Senate in Virginia this year. . . .

Everyone in Washington is wondering whether it was **Joshua Steiner** or his lawyer, **Reid Weingarten**, who hit upon the less-than-inspiring tactic of claiming Steiner had lied to his own diary. . . .

The suspicion that losing **Debra Winger** unhinged **Bob Kerrey** has been reinforced by what he told the White House about an ad the Democratic National Committee was running in Nebraska in favor of the Clinton health plan, which Kerrey has not supported: "I said go ahead and have your fun, but I'm going to kick the crap out of you because it's a waste of money." . . .

If you continue to believe the propaganda that government employees are underpaid, consider **George Stephanopoulos**' purchase of a Connecticut Avenue building this May for $835,000. The building contains commercial rental space on the first floor and what a local publication has described as "an exquisitely renovated" apartment on the top two floors, "with so many custom features that the mind boggles . . . the dumbwaiter which goes from the kitchen to the master bedroom and on up to the roof deck . . . two gas ovens for cooking and an electric one for baking . . . a custom counter and stools for casual entertaining, the dining room for more formal occasions and of course the aforementioned roof deck with its own gas grill . . . fireplaces in both the living room and the master bedroom, both gas so as not to have to haul wood, both activated by a nearby wall switch." With this kind of pad, maybe George can get **Jennifer Grey** back . . . .

Martin Marietta was a beneficiary of $60 million in federal money to help reimburse it for the cost of acquiring the Space Systems Division of General Dynamics. What's wrong with that? First, it just happens that there is a Pentagon rule against having taxpayers subsidize mergers and acquisitions. Second, two people who helped engineer the reimbursement are **William Perry**, the secretary of Defense, and his deputy, **John Deutch**, who according to *Newsday*'s **Patrick Sloyan**, were "on the payroll of Martin Marietta before joining the **Clinton** administration." . . .

I bet you thought I was going to write about those blonde hairs found on **Vince Foster**'s body. But like **Paula Jones**, I have my standards. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

Roman Genn

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Checking Under the Hood

The business press—and the executives of the Big Three—say Detroit is back on top. But for how long?

BY JAMES BENNET

Comeback: The Fall and Rise of the American Automobile Industry
Paul Ingrassia and Joseph B. White, *Simon and Schuster, $25*

At the beginning of 1992, the directors of General Motors Corporation, the world's biggest industrial company, decided to figure out what was going on in the organization they theoretically controlled. The company by then was losing more than $1 billion every three months, and it had given up 10 percentage points of its U.S. car market share—an amount greater than the Chrysler Corporation's total car sales—in the previous seven years.

So in an unprecedented end run around top management, the board deputized one of its own, John G. Smale, the retired chairman of Procter & Gamble, to spend two months interviewing G.M.'s executives and reviewing the company's internal reports.

What Smale found, as described by Paul Ingrassia and Joseph B. White, was astounding: G.M. built lousy cars; it was the industry's most inefficient car designer and producer; and its announced cutbacks wouldn't close the gap between its dwindling sales and its colossal production capacity, meaning the losses would continue.

I say astounding, because the findings were so mundane. This is roughly equivalent to a blue-ribbon presidential commission taking two months in 1994 to figure out that the federal government is running a really big deficit. As the authors note, G.M. did not lack for independent sources of criticism: Automotive journalists and Wall Street auto analysts had been saying all this for years. But the board didn't believe them, because it was easier not to, and because management kept telling them everything was under control.

One of the unstated lessons of this absorbing, rich book is the power of individual men—and they are all men—to bring enormous companies to their knees by spinning captivating visions of financial growth and then controlling information as things go wrong. At G.M., the notorious Roger Smith would issue board members thick financial papers on the mornings before their monthly meetings, then grab them back as soon as the meetings ended. Who could have expected the directors—"bewildered sheep," the authors call them—to have noticed little changes, like when Smith blithely altered projections in 1990 to assume retirees would die two years earlier and that the pension fund would earn 10 percent more per year?

The authors, who won a Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the G.M. boardroom shakeup that followed Smale's investigation, suggest such shenanigans are past for Detroit. The book ends at last January's chest-thumping Detroit auto show, with Big Three sales booming, the Japanese on the run, all the villains conveniently departed, and a new generation of sober leaders committed to teamwork firmly in place.

Perhaps. Still, this big book picks up where

James Bennet is the Detroit bureau chief of The New York Times.

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The Reckoning, David Halberstam's very big book about the decline of the Big Three, left off. And one can't help suspecting this publishing cycle is likely to repeat itself.

It is true that the publicly egomaniacal auto barons have exited. Their managerial flaws notwithstanding, their departure is mourned by journalists because they made great copy. Their antics yield the liveliest passages in *Comeback*.

One of the many previously unreported anecdotes has Ronald Reagan trying to ease Lee Iacocca out of a speaking role during the 1986 celebration of the Statue of Liberty's restoration. Chrysler was a major sponsor of the celebration, Iacocca had headed the national commission to restore the statue, and he was scheduled to introduce Reagan. But the White House was nervous that Iacocca harbored presidential ambitions; it didn't help that Iacocca once called White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan a cocksucker.

Iacocca refused to back out, and ordered Ben Bidwell, a Chrysler executive, to deliver that message.

"Are you saying, Mr. Bidwell," shouts an outraged protocol officer, "that Lee Iacocca will not accede to the wishes of the President of the United States?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying," Bidwell replied. "And if the President doesn't accede to Mr. Iacocca, when the parade of ships begins, the television screens will go blank!" Reagan blinked.

The authors do a wonderful job of shredding the already frayed Iacocca myth. Like Roger Smith, Iacocca, a notorious cheapskate, is seen greedily trying to further pad his bulging pockets and pleading for continued use of the company jet as the board finally pushes him out the door. When he traveled as chairman, a convoy of limos awaited him at every airport; once retired, he was astonished to discover self-service gas stations.

Since the days when Henry Ford squashed all efforts to improve the Model T, this kind of executive arrogance has been a recurring pitfall for the Big Three. It led Iacocca to make many of the same stupid mistakes as executives at G.M. and Ford. During the eighties, the three companies spent billions diversifying into businesses they didn't understand, while their core auto operations suffered. Chrysler lost untold millions trying to manipulate its stock price, buying its own stock high and selling it low.

Some of the book will be familiar to people who have followed the industry. A long section on Ross Perot's relationship to G.M., for example, seems superfluous. But *Comeback* gives an excellent, meticulous survey of what went wrong, particularly at G.M., in the eighties. Students of bureaucracies will be fascinated by the stories about G.M.'s inability to learn not only from its mistakes, but from its successes, like its joint manufacturing venture with Toyota near San Francisco, which makes Corollas for Toyota and Prizms for Chevrolet.

G.M. had believed that the secret to Toyota's efficiency lay in some mysterious high-tech process. When G.M. managers visited the factory, they discovered the secret was in fact a radical philosophy about labor relations and quality control. G.M.'s Detroit executives just couldn't absorb the lesson. Instead of applying Toyota's approach to other plants, they split up the Toyota-trained G.M. managers, reassigning them to different operations where they didn't have a chance to spread the good lessons they had learned.

Downshifting

By 1994, a combination of bad management and new manufacturing techniques, the authors note, had turned G.M. into a "jobs destruction machine." It was headed to total U.S. employment of 300,000, down from twice that in 1985.

While one can easily overdo the tear-jerking tales of blue-collar layoffs, this story would have been less bloodless had the authors better shown the human impact of the screw-ups and, more importantly, of the structural changes they describe. It also might have led them to devote a little more space to the role of the United Automobile Workers union in helping to get these companies into trouble—and to get them out of it.

My main concern about this book, however, stems from a wider problem in business journalism. Covering business news is a lot like covering sports. Unlike the more nuanced, interpre-

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tive task of writing about politics (which carries its own risks), business writing depends on hard numbers to judge performance. Statistics like earnings and market share seem to separate the winners from the losers, and from there it is a short leap to turn the winners into heroes.

Yes, things *have* been getting better at the Big Three. Sales have been strong for more than a year, the companies are reaping record profits, and the Japanese are struggling to retain their share of the market. Big Three quality has improved for some models, and some factories are approaching the efficiency of the better Japanese plants.

But it is too much of a leap to conclude that Detroit has regained the lead, as the packaging of this book suggests, perhaps in hopes of drawing a wider readership. Because of the cyclical nature of the industry, auto recoveries always produce astonishing profits. Between 1984 and 1988, the Big Three earned $45 billion. G.M. and Chrysler were becoming desperately sick, but to the world they looked robust.

The New York Times Magazine in 1985 lauded Roger Smith as "The Innovator," praising his massive capital spending campaign on gee-whiz automation. But in his shiny new Cadillac plant, Smith's robots spent their time painting each other instead of the cars.

The authors know this as well as anyone. As they note, *The New York Times Magazine* in 1985 lauded Roger Smith on its cover as "The Innovator," praising his massive capital spending program on gee-whiz automation. But in his shiny new Cadillac plant, to take one infamous example, Smith's robots spent their time painting each other instead of the cars. Between 1980 and 1985, while lavishing $42 billion on new factories and equipment, G.M. went from being the lowest cost producer among the Big Three to being the highest cost auto producer in the world.

Similarly, the business press treated Don Petersen, the chairman of Ford, as a guru, a philosopher of humane management, largely because he talked a good game and Ford was making record profits in the late eighties. But as the authors reveal for the first time, Petersen in private was a tyrant who often expressed himself with his subordinates by flying into rages and flinging his watch across the room.

It is also hard to pick winners accurately now because of the strength of the yen, which is driving up the prices of Japanese vehicles in the U.S., and the weakness of the Japanese economy, which means the Japanese auto makers can ill afford big losses here. Again, this is familiar. In the mid-eighties, the yen also surged. But as the Japanese cut costs to adjust, the Big Three simply raised their prices to reap profits rather than try to win back share.

This time, the Big Three are raising prices more slowly than the Japanese. Still, Toyota claims to have devoted one in five white collar workers to cost-cutting, making seemingly picayune savings like not painting four hidden screws on the Corolla. Such changes will add up, and once these companies figure out how to compete at 100 yen to the dollar, the "comeback" could fizzle fast.

The authors are too smart not to mention these facts, but they do not dwell on them. They do not suggest that the mistaken conclusions journalists have drawn in the past should restrain euphoria about the apparent comeback. The overwhelming impression they convey is that Detroit is back—and if Detroit is back, Detroit's managers must be larger than life. Sometimes, the urge to make that point gets them into trouble.

For example, in describing efforts by G.M.'s new chief executive, John F. Smith, Jr., to improve quality the authors track warranty costs for the Cavalier subcompact. These costs are an index of durability since they show how much

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the company is spending to fix the cars it sells; they dropped by 42 percent between 1989 and 1993. In an aside, the authors mention that Smith's quality initiatives came on top of efforts begun by his predecessor, Robert Stempel, whom they generally portray as being hopelessly in over his head.

Well, Smith did not take over until, at the earliest, the spring of 1992. As a result, this is a bit like using one guy's home runs to calculate another guy's slugging percentage. Even when executives like Smith try to hide in the background and emphasize the work of their underlings, we journalists have a tendency to build cults of personality around them.

The Big Three are getting better, although G.M. in particular has a very long way to go. The Japanese auto makers are also getting better, as are the Europeans and the Koreans. Many are rushing to build factories in the United States, the new global center for low-cost manufacturing. Ultimately, the authors back away from their personality-heavy analysis and come to a less arguable conclusion about the real winners of this perpetual free-for-all, which pits each company against the others, not the Americans against the Japanese. They are the auto workers—not just because they still have jobs, but because some bosses are now interested not only in their muscle, but in their ideas about organizing production; and consumers, whose cars and trucks are safer, and less likely to break. □

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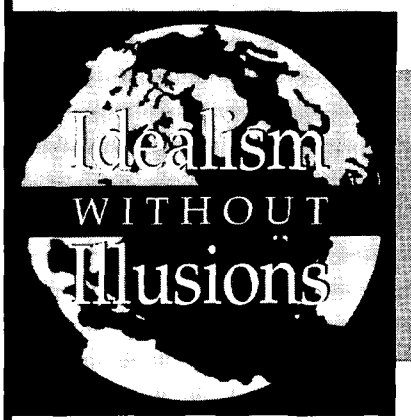

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Reagan Reconsidered

When the Republicans held the presidency, they abandoned their principles and expanded government with the same vigor as the liberals they love to hate

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Dead Right: The Fall of the Conservatism of Hope and the Rise of the Conservatism of Fear
David Frum, *New Republic/Basic Books, $25*

In this, the 25th anniversary year of Apollo 11, it's worth recalling the famous quip of conservative trencherman M. Stanton Evans: "Any country that can put a man on the moon ought to be able to abolish the federal government."

Sigh. A dozen years after the moon landing, Ronald Reagan came to power, and conservatives had their big chance. But we blew it. That could have served as the subtitle to David Frum's excellent book, *Dead Right,* but the one he put on it will do: "The Fall of the Conservatism of Hope and the Rise of the Conservatism of Fear."

This is a brilliantly argued, wonderfully readable and into the bargain a rather witty book. And it is, by gum, an important book, a 205-page reality check on the future of Republican politics. Republicans, and the conservatives who court them, have been in denial ever since David Stockman started warning about the deficits. The result is an ideological Yugoslavia, with Pat Buchanan leading the Croats and Ollie North at the head of the Serbs. At the rate it's going, Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour ought to consider siting the '96 convention in Sarajevo.

How—oh, how?—did we get ourselves into this mess? Frum provides the answer on page 204, but since this isn't a John Grisham novel, I'm going to give away the ending. It won't ruin your enjoyment; Frum is so good he manages to make wonk reading exhilarating, almost page-turning. The answer is that "*we* [the conservatives] adapted to *them* [the American people]."

If this sounds appallingly elitist, let us now proceed backwards to page one to see how Frum arrived at his conclusion.

Reagan came into office promising, among other things, to balance the budget. And here we are with these deficits the size of the budgets of some countries. As then-Vice President Bush's speechwriter (1981 to 1983), I wrote a lot of gargle about how we could absorb these, uh, revenue shortfalls—or whatever camouflage grease I was applying to the d-word in those days—but my fingers always felt a little dirty after lifting off the typewriter. In private, I would go in search of conservative wise men and ask, in a hushed voice, Why are we doing this? Do not worry, I was told, by people whom I had heard extolling the virtues of government thrift for decades: The deficits aren't that bad, relative to GNP. Yadda, yadda, yadda. Back I went to the typewriter to inveigh against Walter Mondale, and yet I had that. . . un-fresh feeling. Something seemed to me to remain profoundly, tectonically wrong.

And something *was* wrong. "For a brief and wonderful moment," writes Frum, "supply-side economics held out the hope of limiting govern-

Christopher Buckley is the editor of Forbes FYI. *His new book is* Thank You For Smoking, *a novel.*

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ment in a way that offended nobody. Alas, that part of the supply-side vision was quickly falsified by events." Faced with these overwhelming, theory-refuting (or, *pace* Bush, voodoo-confirming) numbers, Reagan stared into the eyes of the beast and flinched. We would grow out of the deficits, he said in that way of his, if he addressed the d-thing at all, and then would motorcade off to give another speech about the magic of the marketplace, the Evil Empire, and those awful Colombian drug barons.

Well, the ineluctable truth of the matter is that Reagan failed to do the dirty, rotten, lousy work of conservatism. He failed to cut spending, failed to brake the growth of government, failed to tell the truth: We're spending too much on Social Security, Medicare, entitlements, UDAG, the whole schmear. Why didn't he? Maybe he was smarter than the conservatives who voted for him, at least in this sense: Maybe he understood that for all his rhetoric, Americans basically *like* big government, Social Security, Medicare, veterans' benefits, farm and mohair subsidies, all the oinky meat at the bottom of the barrel. But if that's so, was he lying to us about cutting spending and shrinking Uncle Sam?

Frum's book is an unsettling litany of promises broken and unkept. "Despite all the caterwauling about Reagan's supposedly savage budget cuts in 1981, not one major spending program was abolished during the Reagan presidency." He only did away with one spending program, CETA; and that was immediately replaced with the Jobs Training Partnership Act, sponsored by one Senator Dan Quayle (co-sponsored by Teddy Kennedy). Honestly, it's enough to make you *weep*.

It gets worse. Reagan's 1983 Social Security tax nullified the much ballyhooed 1981 Kemp-Roth tax cut; indeed, families at the median income level actually had their taxes *rise* between 1981 and 1984.

Defenders of Reagan like to blame it all on Bush's (politically disastrous) 1990 tax increase. But as Frum points out, more than half the (Kemp-Roth) tax cut was lost between 1985 and 1989. Moreover, "If it's not honest to blame the loss of the tax cut on George Bush, it's even worse to blame the chronic overspending that made the tax cut unsustainable on a profligate liberal Democratic Congress. Of course liberals and Democrats are profligate. That's why God makes conservatives and Republicans—to stop Democrats from spending the nation into bankruptcy. But, through the 1980s, the conservatives failed to do their job."

All this sad, bottom-line arithmetic has left conservatives literally speechless. Conservatism is at its most eloquent when, as an early *National Review* editorial nicely put it, it stands athwart history yelling "Stop!" By the end of the eighties, the Evil Empire lay in ruins (for which Reagan and conservatives can justifiably pat themselves on the back; the commies sure didn't surrender to Anthony Lewis), so the problem became, What are we going to be against *now*?

Scott Gordley

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Reckless government spending? Uh. . . what else you got?

Medicare? Er. . . well, as a result of Reagan-era policies, the cost of Medicare rose by an average of nearly 12 percent a year between 1980 and 1993, swallowing more than 11 percent of all federal revenues. Medicare, more than any other program, unbalanced Reagan's budgets; worse, it drove up all medical costs, causing employers to tighten up on benefits, which in turn deepened voter anxiety. "If Reagan had understood a little more clearly the full implications of conservatism's can't-get-something-for-nothing wisdom," Frum writes, "Bush might still be pitching horseshoes on the White House lawn."

What about economic risk-aversiveness? Can we be against that?

Reality check! Reagan's sunny ideology in favor of the independent businessman as salt-of-the-earth eventually led to reckless deposit insurance and savings and loan policies that, in the first instance, turned everyone—including certain prominent Democratic congressmen—into "loan whores," and in the second, effectively nationalized 40 percent of the mortgages of American home buyers. The result of these cockamamie policies was Treasury banging a tin cup against the gate on Pennsylvania Avenue, and the webbing of vast new security nets underneath—businessmen! That muffled shriek you hear is Calvin Coolidge groaning in his grave. How ironic that as Reagan so effectively warred against communism abroad, he was enabling economic socialism at home.

Battle Hymn of the Republicans

Don't misunderstand Frum. There's still *plenty* to hate about you *dreadful* liberals. Your brilliant welfare policies have more or less destroyed the black family, with illegitimacy rates now approaching 70 percent; and nice going there with affirmative action, which has polarized things to a fare-thee-well, enabling racism on both sides, as well as costing the economy, by one estimate, four GNP points per year. Your obsession with multiculturalism has helped to make American universities a laughingstock, and their graduates illiterate. I could go on. Point is, you can wipe that smug smile off your Chardonnay-stained chins. But to return to the self-flagellation in progress, we had the chance to stop you, and we didn't. So what are we left with, issue-wise?

At this point, Frum's book moves into three chapters that ought to be required reading for anyone who thinks that the future of conservatism lies in the hands of Jack Kemp, Bill Bennett, or Pat Buchanan. Frum calls these three and their camps, respectively, the Optimists, Moralists, and Nationalists.

It's tempting, after digesting Frum's fine examination of Kemp, Bennett, and Buchanan, to call them "Hear No Evil," "Speak Against Evil," and "Evil," but that runs the risk of (slightly) misrepresenting Frum, and I don't want to let my prejudices get in the way of his more precise eviscerations. Suffice it to say that if the future of my party lies with these three, then make mine vanilla. Kemp's disposition is as sunny as that of his former marionette, Reagan. (Recall that supply-side was Kemp's, not Reagan's.) He is therefore Reagan's natural successor, which, given the record, ought by itself to set off the sprinklers. The irony—boy, does this book teem with irony—is that Kemp proved himself all too able a Reagan man. That is to say, he talked right, and spent left. Reagan was going to abolish the Departments of Education and Energy. Kemp, mad in pursuit of fuzzy, half-baked Great Society Phase II notions of making welfare mothers into Republicans by giving them deed and title to their rat-infested public housing hovels, swelled HUD's budgets by 50 percent in four years. And is anyone out there in the inner city better off than they were four years earlier? Hello? Hello? For that matter, does anyone still believe Kemp's smooth asseverations that we can grow our way out of underclass illegitimacy with economic expansion rates of 4-5-6 percent? George Will doesn't. In the end, Frum observes, Kemp "seems fated to be the James G. Blaine of the twentieth century: the plumed knight of the Republican Party who somehow never quite makes the historical cut. He is the end of something rather than the beginning of something."

Of the man who began the eighties as an ob-

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scure college professor and can now charge $25,000 per speech, Frum wittily observes that, "It is hard to decide whether Secretary [Bill] Bennett was among the most or the least successful of President Reagan's cabinet appointees." His ideas about conservative educational standards have now become part of the national dialogue, and you gotta love someone who gives the National Education Association such a hard time, but "few cabinet secretaries can have made as little personal difference to the daily operation of their bureaucracy. Even Bennett's admirers concede, as the Heritage Foundation did in 1989, that 'Bennett accomplished little to make reforms part of the legislative framework.'"

Why was this so? Because—emerging theme here—he was too busy making speeches to pay attention to the nitty-gritty dirty work of government. And as Frum rightly points out, "a speech about the family is not the same as cutting off the subsidies that promote the disintegration of families."

We come now to Pat Buchanan, the third in this tricky troika. As anyone knows who went running for the medicine cabinet and the Prozac during Buchanan's bile-and-brimstone 1992 Republican convention speech, Buchanan is the front man for the Conservatism of Fear. Here we have the paranoid style in conservative politics, with a large scoop of anti-Semitism. Frum draws a straight line from the pre-World War II America First movement to Buchanan's isolationism (except in the case of the formerly Hitlerite Croats, whom, go figure, he would like U.S. troops to aid), with Israel now playing the manipulative, warmongering role that Britain once played.

All this we already knew. What is surprising, and even amusing, in a pathetic sort of way, is what a liberal Buchanan turned out to be the first time he ventured beyond the Beltway he professes to so despise in search of actual, grubby votes. As a presidential candidate in New Hampshire, attacking President Bush's spendthrift policies, Buchanan could bring himself to name only three specific budget cuts he would make as (shudder) president: half of the congressional pay raise ($6 million); eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts ($165 million); and ending foreign aid ($13 billion). The total U.S. budget that year was $1.5 trillion, "an amount equal to the entire gross domestic product of united Germany. From that vast ocean of money, fed by roaring rivers of unnecessary and destructive spending, greasy with floating blobs of waste, Buchanan could bring himself to blot up rather less than 1 percent." Well, bear in mind, the man did train under Nixon.

Stumping awkwardly at a New Hampshire factory, Buchanan endorsed protecting American lumber workers against. . . Canada. "Protectionism," Frum writes, "is a way for conservatives to show solidarity with the fellow-Americans, especially blue-collar fellow-Americans, without explicitly endorsing the redistribution of wealth."

As for Buchanan's more pungent views on homos and the dusky hordes, Frum views those in the following, interesting context: "Nationalist conservatism simply imports left-wing identity politics into a new context. If the rights of blacks, gays and Hispanics were to be asserted, why not those of middle-aged Irish Catholics or white Southerners?"

They have one thing in common, Kemp, Bennett, and Buchanan: In the final analysis, they're all talk. They all give great, red-meat speeches that bring the crowds to their feet—then it's off to the next one. Without detracting from their admitted oratorical skills, it's fair to say giving a speech is easy; it's the plumbing that's hard.

Where does this leave us? To fret about the religious right? While the menacing Christian hordes have struck terror into the hearts of Sidney Blumenthal and Anthony Lewis, Frum's chapter, "The Pseudo-Menace of the Religious Right," makes a good case for his conviction that we are safe, for the nonce, from Pat Robertson and his holy rollers. "There is no religious right," Frum ventures, "not, at least, as the term is commonly used." The non-conservative press is certainly doing its best to convince everyone that the Republican Party has been seized by body-snatching Baptists, but stop, take a deep breath, consider: If that is the case, why did Pat Robertson finish such a dismal fourth in 1988? The numbers, says Frum, simply do not add up to real electoral power:

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> While enormous numbers of Americans, upward of 50 million, describe themselves as 'evangelical' or 'born again,' those terms are so capacious as to be useless. The number of white Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, and charismatics, who together form the potential political base of a religious right is not large: perhaps 15 million people spread out over some thirty states. There are twice as many black Americans.

But as long as we're on the subject, the Irreligious Left (I'm talking to you, People for The American Way) really ought, somewhere, sometime, to acknowledge that they created this notional Frankenstein in the first place:

> For thirty-five years, beginning with the 1962 Supreme Court decision banning school prayer, through Jimmy Carter's campaign to deny tax-deductible status to religious schools whose enrollments did not match the racial composition of the surrounding area, and up to the National Endowment for the Arts' grants to artists who made blasphemous use of Christian themes, the political authorities have poked and insulted religious people in the name of one liberal cause or another. When the authorities encountered resistance—feeble and localized as it generally has been—liberal-minded people have found it all too easy to think, in the words of the old French proverb, *"cet animal est très mèchant; quand on l'attaque, il se defende."* ("What a wicked animal; when attacked, he defends himself.")

Finally, Frum discerns a nice conceit: "Spend any time listening to the sermons of Pentecostals and Baptists, and it strikes you that they think of God very much in the same way that Great Society liberals thought of government: a distant, benevolent agency that showers goodies upon all those who ask, without demanding anything very much in return—except for the occasional campaign contribution."

The larger problem, he says, is that the post-Reagan conservatives have thrown in the towel on the important issues (Social Security, welfare) and have gone after cultural issues. This is an abdication of the high ground. Welfare "reform" ought to have been on Reagan's agenda, not Bill Clinton's. (Which isn't to say he'll do any better, but good luck to him.) Conservative leaders like Newt Gingrich seem to believe that we're living in the endgame period of the welfare state, that it's going to self-destruct soon and that then will be the time to do something about it. Not good enough, says Frum; conservatives ought to be working on a plan now instead of stepping back from the plate. America is already so nervous that last time around 19 million of them voted for Ross Perot, whom Frum calls the most dangerous demagogue to emerge in the country since Huey Long.

But to act, as opposed to making speeches, takes courage, and from the record it is not at all clear that conservatives possess this quality. Of the failure of what he damningly calls "the Reagan interlude," he says that "Conservatism was never supposed to be a sunny political ideology, or an easy sell. It was always a doctrine for the tough-minded. . . And as we have discovered the uncomfortable truth that [the security-demanding American people] are not with us, we have adapted to them."

So it wasn't such an elitist thought after all, was it?

The theme that runs through this rather urgent book is the same as the one actress Bette Davis had embroidered on a pillow in her house: "No Guts, No Glory."

There in a downy nutshell is the story of conservatism in the 1980s. In the end, Ronald Reagan did not have the courage of his convictions. You could say it on one of those T-shirts: MY DAD GOT A SECOND TERM AND ALL WE GOT WERE THESE LOUSY DEFICITS. We need to be honest with ourselves, says Frum, if we're to end the denial and present ourselves credibly in 1996.

Unfortunately, there is nothing in the records of front-runners Kemp, Bennett, or Buchanan to suggest that they are the men to do this. Sometimes, in my hopeful wakings at 3 a.m., I think to myself that what this country could really use is a man, or a woman, who, upon taking the oath of office as president of the United States, would then pledge in the inaugural speech that followed not to seek a second term. And then I go back to sleep. □

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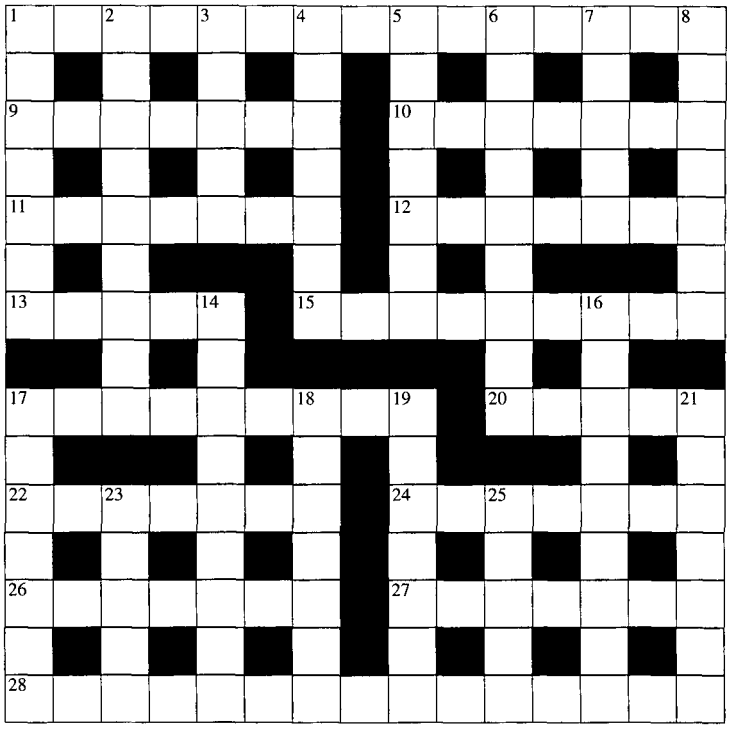
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



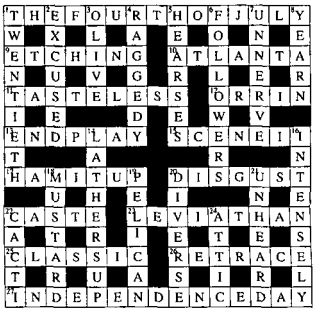
ACROSS

1. Western Hemisphere problem involved Thai army initial. (7, 8)
9. Fleeing date torn up red chit. (7)
10. Clumsy dot wins real dinner. (3, 4)
11. African nation composed aria about broken leg. (7)
12. Big Leno mix-up is common. (7)
13. Coach in extra-inning technique. . . . (5)
15. . . . . using this cleat for exercise (9)
17. Worn out? Never date stranger! (9)
20. White House favorite haberdashery? (5)
22. Hun capturing devastated Rome is big blow. (4, 3)
24. Predecessor of 1 Across was a pediatrician? (4, 3)
26. Nice husband includes element for drink. (7)
27. Pepper shook Nancy with ease. (7)
28. Eastern Hemisphere problem demonstrated warfare gun needs. (7, 8)

DOWN

1. Try hand mix for fire protection. (7)
2. Bring together, specially treating start of experiment. (9)
3. Special blood in every which organism. (5)
4. Special truck in rainstorm brings bliss. (7)
5. Massachusetts resort cracking whips around 99. (7)
6. Fiancés played tennis, including deed lacking energy. (9)
7. Early tests backing angry crowd in Buenos Aires. (1, 4)
8. Seek any new Gotham group. (7)
14. Ignore the pests Edward ingested. (5, 4)
16. Impact of throwing nice North Dakota ice. (9)
17. Graverobber is joke of former spouse, we hear. (7)
18. Strain in stone construction. (7)
19. Editor's instruction about returning taxi is a failure. (7)
21. Little routes around pain are sources of smell. (7)
23. She puts an end to discrimination in new Army. (5)
25. Swamp upsetting American University boy. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Political Booknotes

Blond Ghost: Ted Shackley and the C.I.A.'s Crusades
David Corn
Simon and Schuster, $27.50
By Gregg Easterbrook

David Corn, Washington editor of *The Nation* magazine and an accomplished journalist, has expended enormous effort chasing down the life story of Theodore Shackley. Shackley was a leading Central Intelligence Agency figure from the onset of the Cold War until his semi-compelled retirement when Stansfield Turner purged the agency during the Carter administration, and later, Shackley's name surfaced as a secondary player in the Iran-*contra* scandal. The resulting book is an amazing compendium of C.I.A. fact and lore. Every paragraph is packed with names, dates, and specifics about the inner life of the American intelligence community. But every so often you run across a well-researched, well-written book that for some reason doesn't quite click. This is one.

Is the book a biography? Not really, since much of the text does not concern Shackley directly. Is the book a history of C.I.A. excesses? If so, the focus on Shackley becomes strained and artificial. Is the book an indictment of the (presumably now past) C.I.A. infatuation with dubious covert operations at the expense of worthwhile intelligence gathering? Not really, since *Blond Ghost* paints covert operations in a bad hue, but never makes apparent what an intelligence agency would be justified in doing. The result is an interesting book, one for which Corn should be generously credited with undertaking and that is definitely worth reading, but one that left me feeling oddly unsatisfied.

Perhaps this result was dictated by the choice of Shackley as subject matter. In some ways he can appear to have been the personification of the C.I.A. gone bad. But in other ways Shackley's life meanders across the intelligence landscape toward no clear end beyond self-advancement, and in many of his exploits the line between bad idea from the start and good idea that got out of hand is impossible to draw. In this Shackley is like the C.I.A. itself: palpably creepy, but you can't be sure whether that stems from being sinister or just secretive. As the C.I.A. is vaporous and at many levels hard to draw conclusions about, Corn's book seems to have trouble coming to conclusions beyond straightforward ones, such as that intelligence operations should be lawful.

Joining the agency shortly after its creation following World War II, Shackley went on to become a senior C.I.A. official in pre-Wall Germany, when Berlin was the center of the espionage universe; in Miami, when the C.I.A. was preparing for the Bay of Pigs and attempting to unseat Castro (for a time the Miami bureau was the C.I.A.'s largest operation); in Laos, during the "secret war" of the late 1960s; in Saigon, during the Vietnam War; and in Washington, during the Church Committee hearings into C.I.A. malfeasance, when the American role in domestic politics in Chile was coming to light, and the first halting attempts at public scrutiny of the C.I.A. were beginning.

Shackley rose to be the C.I.A.'s associate deputy director and was, in the 1970s, mentioned as a potential future C.I.A. director (insiders make a great show of calling this job by its formal name, "director of central intelligence"). But Shackley's career foundered on his association with the C.I.A. officer-turned-gangster Edwin Wilson, who sold arms to Muammar Qaddafi. (Wilson also often entertained C.I.A. officials at a Virginia hunt country estate, yet no one in the agency seems to have questioned how he lived far beyond the means of his government salary, a precedent missed in the Aldrich Ames coverage.) After leaving the C.I.A., Shackley started hazy consulting and "political risk analysis" businesses with so-clean-they-sound-suspicious names like Research Associates International.

As a private operator, Shackley got messed up with Thomas Clines, Richard Secord, Albert Hakim, and others involved with Iran-*contra*. Ultimately Shackley became the target of the hallucinogenic Christic Institute lawsuit, which drew considerable publicity for claiming Shackley was the evil mastermind of a globe-spanning drug and assassination conspiracy and which was taken in full seriousness by Hollywood trendy-cause donors such as Jackson Browne. Ultimately the suit was dismissed and, in a rare judgment that surely would win the *Monthly*'s approval, about $1 million in legal costs were awarded to Shackley, bankrupting Christic.

Corn acknowledges that however exotic Shackley may sound in outline, "as is true of some of the better spies, he was not a colorful man." Corn notes, "For many C.I.A. employees

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during the Cold War, the drama in the intelligence business came not from face-to-face confrontations with an armed KGB officer. It was found in the office." Corn depicts Shackley as first and foremost a bureaucrat: obsessed with memos and performance statistics, with chains of command, with CYA. Two examples:

➤ As head of Agency operations in Laos in 1968, Shackley decided to fortify a place called Nam Bac, near the border of Laos and North Vietnam, with U.S.-backed Laotian forces. As Corn tells it, "The point was to take the war to the NVA, 'to really bloody the nose of the North Vietnamese,' as one embassy officer recounted." It was a complicated logistical operation, and Shackley was warned that no Laotian commander could handle the job. Shackley ignored the warnings, believing "Washington would be ecstatic" if he could establish a presence in the North. The operation failed miserably; 2,000 Laotian soldiers were killed. "'It was a terrible waste of people,' remarked a senior embassy official, 'and basically because of Ted's ambitions.'" Shackley's report to C.I.A. Director Richard Helms and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow on the debacle exculpated himself and blamed local commanders, who had been against the operation in the first place: one career diplomat who read it said, "It was the most dishonest piece of political-military reporting I had ever seen in my life."

➤ Shackley's next posting was station chief in Saigon at the height of the war. Corn reports that once when Henry Kissinger was visiting the Saigon station, a senior officer asked if he was satisfied with the intelligence he was getting. As long as it supports my policy, Kissinger replied, I am satisfied. Shackley, ever the careerist, apparently took that to heart. Shackley, according to Corn, promoted the line Washington hawks wanted to hear: the Viet Cong were on the decline, enemy casualties were heavy, the North's power was slipping. Officers who tried to get the real, discouraging news up the chain were shut down by Shackley. "'You knew it wouldn't get out of Vietnam that way, because it was bad news,' said Bob Wall, an Agency man who was on the ground. 'You knew Shackley wouldn't approve it.'"

Corn presents Shackley, though often wrapping himself in the flag, as privately indifferent about whether operations resulted in the gains for the United States or were fiascoes that led to the deaths of friendly agents (as happened under Shackley's command at Berlin, Cuba, and elsewhere) or the persecution of civilians (as happened to the Hmong tribe, which the C.I.A. seduced and abandoned in Laos, and even, Corn says, occasionally bombed by mistake). In this Shackley does sound like a distillation of the C.I.A.'s worst faults. As a cross-check of Corn's thesis I spoke to one former C.I.A. official who worked closely with Shackley: He described the subject of *Blond Ghost* as "an amoral man, interested in nothing other than himself." This view syncs perfectly with the book's portrayal.

Shackley also served Langley's in-house interests. Corn writes of the period after former C.I.A. official Philip Agee had become disenchanted with the agency and declared his intention to publish a book naming agents, but had not actually done so. Shackley was in charge of the anti-Agee operation and cold-heartedly jettisoned C.I.A. operatives simply because Agee might expose them; his dismissal of many operatives without thanks or cause is ironic in light of how bitterly Shackley later complained in right-wing circles of his own dismissal by Turner, though in Shackley's association with Wilson, Turner had very good cause. At any rate, monitoring Agee, Shackley planted two agents as friends of the former officer, then had them pass Agee both money—ostensibly as loans from sympathetic leftists—and bugged typewriters. The money was to hook Agee to the planted "friends": one of them the sole actually tall, shapely woman in, it seems, the entire history of real espionage. Corn suggests that instead of shutting Agee down, this agency money allowed Agee to go on writing when he was penniless.

"Without money from Shackley, Agee's book project might have faltered and died," Corn writes. At one point, hoping to exert remote-control over the renegade, "Shackley and his operations chief were even trying to get Agee a book contract."

Unfortunately, *Blond Ghost* descends to anticlimax when, in an epilogue, Corn describes the one interview he was able to wrest from Shackley. Shackley acts soulless and dodges questions: Nothing comes of the confrontation.

The reader exits wondering if this is a typical C.I.A. automaton or simply a failed human being. Perhaps Shackley is both: In a sense, he is emblematic of the kind of bad guys who populated the C.I.A. in the Cold War. They weren't necessarily evil, but the sum total of the things they did, by and large, was. There were good guys in the C.I.A., but often they were driven down to the level of the bad. And what should the good guys have stood for? One of the problems with this book is Corn's failure to articulate what sorts of missions he thinks would have been justified.

Corn writes that he is avoiding conclusions because "good biographies tend to speak for themselves." But in an area such as the C.I.A., where "facts" are uncertain and the footing ever-shifting, little speaks for itself. I left *Blond Ghost* thinking the book was not as interesting as the article based on the book, which this magazine published in its July/August issue, an article in which Corn simply came out and said what he thought about the C.I.A. and the culture of intelligence. *Blond Ghost* needed

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more conclusions, and fewer accounts of whose names were on what memos.

Gregg Easterbrook is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, Newsweek, *and* The Atlantic Monthly.

The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War
Raymond L. Garthoff
Brookings Books, $44.95
By Alfred Friendly, Jr.

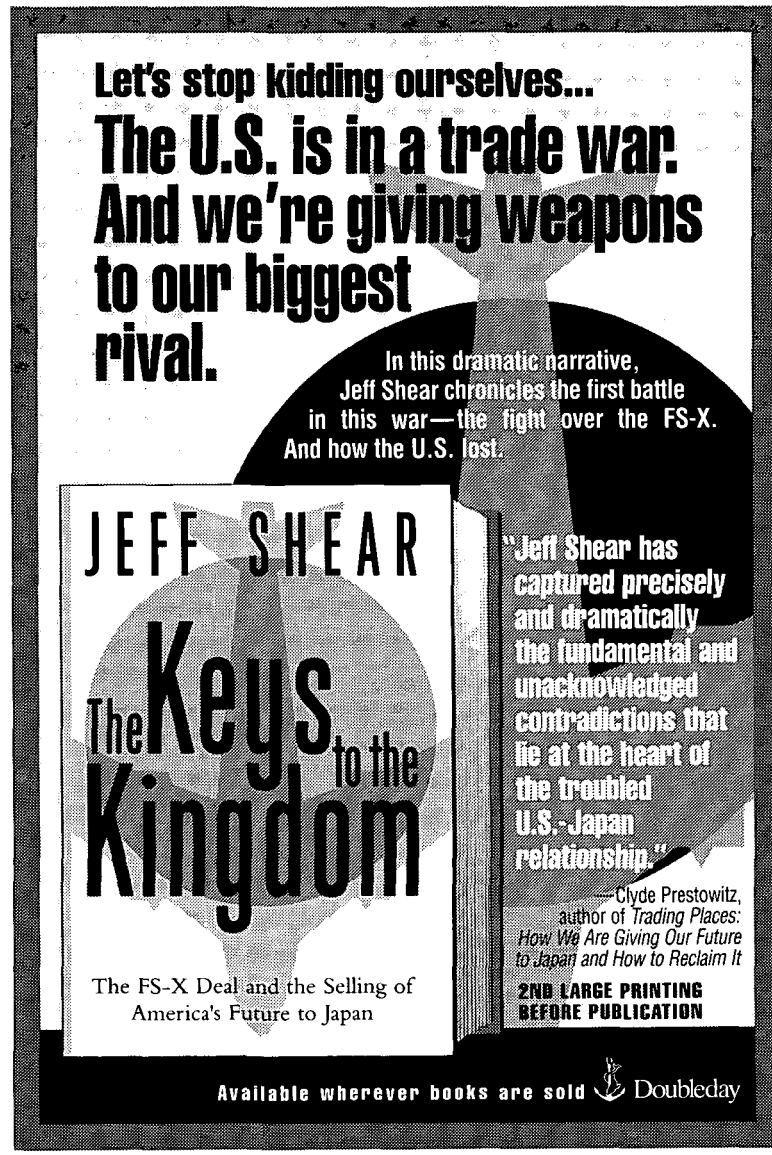
The United States pushed the Soviet empire to its knees and won the Cold War. No, the USSR collapsed of its own rotting weight, and Japan won the Cold War. Option three: A brilliant Kremlin leader, besieged at home and long misunderstood abroad, perceived the irrelevance of superpower military competition to the overarching new challenges of global security and engineered a strategic retreat toward sanity in East-West relations.

Those who prefer Thomas Carlyle to Caspar Weinberger will lean toward the last of the summary verdicts proposed above and will find in Raymond L. Garthoff a potent ally. His latest, massive (780 pages) study of the Cold War's finale piles up a tower of evidence for the view of Mikhail Gorbachev as the catalyst and inspired conductor of this century's grandest peaceful realignment. Or, as the author concludes:

> Gorbachev pressed ahead with his unilateral actions and concessionary negotiations not owing to the Reagan hard line and military buildup, but despite it. He was determined to change the name of the game. . . He did not lose the arms race, he called it off.

Wrapping up the Moscow-Washington diplomatic record from 1981 through 1991, this analysis comes as no surprise. Gorbachev's "impact," Garthoff writes, was "the single most significant factor" in reversing superpower confrontation. "Only a Soviet leader could have ended the Cold War. . . " and "Gorbachev set out deliberately" to do so. "His avowed acceptance of the interdependence of the world, of the priority of all-human values over class values, and of the indivisibility of common security marked a revolutionary ideological change." Gorbachev "was the first Soviet leader to see the world in post-Leninist terms." And so on.

Whatever future analysts think of such encomiums, they will surely bless Garthoff for the thorough scholarship of *The Great Transition* and its predecessor volume, *Détente and Confrontation* (1985), out in a revised edition this year. Separately and together, the two works are authoritative contemporary history. In assem-



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bling and ordering so much of the primary record and supplementing it with a wealth of illuminating, secondary sources, Garthoff has done for the final decades of Soviet-American relations what the Venerable Bede did for the early centuries of English Christianity.

The result is an essential reference work, if not always the liveliest reading. Official Soviet prose, even of the Gorbachev era, is turgid. Long citations set the reader's brain to napping and eye to roving. Fortunately, Garthoff the diplomat-turned-academic is an industrious reporter as well. He has not just pored through Soviet archives that only recently opened; he has also kept up a 30-year conversation with many Kremlin advisors and Beltway insiders able to interpret the official results. Their confidences give his judgments added weight.

Nonetheless, Garthoff's view of Gorbachev as the masterful, decisive visionary is not fully convincing. In dealings between Washington and Moscow from 1986 onwards, the main focus of *The Great Transition,* the diplomatic initiative repeatedly fell—by White House default—to the Soviet leader, and he repeatedly seized and widened each opportunity. But his imaginative moves may have been dictated as much by internal needs as by global discernment, a series of tactical shifts couched in terms of grand, innovative strategy. The larger Gorbachev loomed on the international stage, the longer he was able to ride the tiger he had unpenned at home.

It does not diminish the revolutionary role or significance of Mikhail Gorbachev to suggest that the more resistance he met to domestic reform, the more daring he became in revising, then abandoning, hallowed dogma in foreign affairs. Did he hope that by withdrawing from over-extended positions in Afghanistan, Africa, Nicaragua, and Eastern Europe, he could win time—perhaps even some Western economic support—to consolidate the hold of a rejuvenated Communist apparat on the USSR? Did he "call off" the arms race because he—and he alone—understood it could produce no winner, or in hopes of restructuring the Soviet economy for a different competition, or because it was easier to make deals even with a partner as incoherent as Ronald Reagan than it was to reanimate his own society?

Motive is not the only question historians must weigh in sorting out the collapse of Soviet power, but some will certainly probe those of Mikhail Gorbachev more skeptically than Garthoff has. Given the author's focus on the diplomatic record and especially on arms control, he has made a commendable effort to examine contemporary domestic politics in both Washington and Moscow as backdrops to the by-play between the two capitals. To have done that job thoroughly would have at least doubled the length of this study.

Doing it summarily, however, leads Garthoff to write that "All in all, Gorbachev did succeed [by mid-1988] in advancing political reform" and to conclude that in mid-1991 "Economic reform was also proceeding (although so, too, was continuing economic decline)." Such cursory judgments ring only partly true. Gorbachev actually undercut and even reversed the momentum of political and economic change in the fall of 1990 when, facing fierce opposition, he shelved the radical plan of action he had initially sponsored.

Garthoff records this episode and many similar detours on the bumpy road of *perestroika,* but he rarely attempts to connect the fitful Soviet progress on the home front with the far more decisive performance beyond the Soviet borders. In the larger arena, Garthoff cloaks his hero in statesman's robes. Yet, Gorbachev's fellow citizens increasingly came to see him as an unclothed emperor.

Devastating in its portrayal of the self-deluded policy-makers of the Reagan administration, *The Great Transition* seems, and not only just by contrast, overly generous to the acumen of the Kremlin leadership. Historians in the next century may find Gorbachev to have been only a better-than-ordinary politician extracting every lingering advantage from a hopeless situation. Or they may judge him a classic prophet without honor in his own country. In either case, they will find in Ambassador Garthoff's work an exceptional source of detail and documentation on which to draw.

Alfred Friendly, Jr. is a former foreign correspondent for Newsweek *and* The New York Times.

A Better Place to Live: Reshaping the American Suburbs

Philip Langdon
University of Massachusetts Press
$29.95

By Nicholas Lemann

The United States has just become a suburban-majority nation—that is, over 50 percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas but outside the city limits. As a statistic, this is up there with the Census Department's announcement 100 years ago (which became the foundation of Frederick Jackson Turner's career as the leading American historian of his day) that there was no longer a detectable frontier line. It has vast and pervasive implications: Everything from presidential politics to pop culture is now suburb-dominated, and it looks as if the suburbs are only going to continue growing.

The fields of architecture, planning, and urban studies have long been implicitly or explicitly hostile to the suburbs, palpably yearning for the day when the federal government would stop subsidizing interstate highways and home mortgages, when racial prejudice would lessen,

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and when, consequently, the mass migration back to the cities and yard-free, car-free living could commence. Meanwhile the opposite continues to happen—and today blacks are suburbanizing more rapidly than whites.

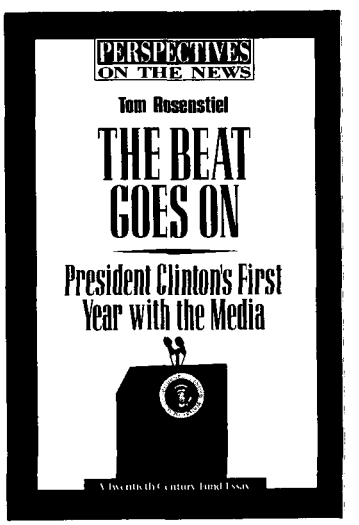
What Bill Clinton did in 1992 was try to arrive at a liberal Democratic political formula that would appeal to suburban voters rather than just writing off the suburbs as Republican territory. It worked, both politically and morally—most of the time Clinton has given the impression of trying to find common ground between suburbanites and liberalism, rather than pandering. It would be nice if a parallel process could occur in the design-of-space professions: If, recognizing that there's a lot not to like about the suburbs, they still tried to create a suburbia we could feel better about: one less anonymous, less segregated, less car-dependent, and more communitarian.

This is the cause that Philip Langdon (whom I know slightly by virtue of our both being associated with *The Atlantic Monthly*) takes on in *A Better Place to Live*. Rather than being a Lewis Mumford- or Jane Jacobs-like lordly architectural theorist, Langdon defines his mission as collating and promoting the work of others—mostly a loose group of architects and planners who are trying to create an improved breed of neighborhoods made up of single-family homes with yards and garages. Langdon calls these people "traditionalists"; their work recalls the earliest (in some cases pre-automobile) generation of suburbs—places like Oak Park, Illinois.

The traditionalists' main causes are re-establishing street grids, finding a balance between uniformity and variety in house design, designing houses that face and sit close to the street, and locating shopping districts nearer to residential ones. The payoff of all this, aside from how it looks, is that it would generate the human interaction and street life that so many suburbs sorely lack. The antipode of the traditionalist suburb, to Langdon, is a place like Irvine, California, which is the result of meticulous but misguided planning rather than sprawl. Everyone lives in over-regulated walled neighborhoods, you can't walk anywhere, and all shopping has to be done on huge, daunting "arterial" roads.

The natural objection to Langdon's views is that they're unrealistic: People actually like arterials, cul-de-sacs, and garage-to-the-front houses, and that's why there are so many of these things. It is true that Langdon has to rely on only a tiny handful of contemporary examples (the leading one of which, Seaside, Florida, isn't a suburb at all, but a resort) to demonstrate that there is a movement toward traditionalist suburbs. On the other hand, it is undeniably true that suburbs with street grids, sidewalks, front porches, and strollable shopping districts are both more pleasant and more democratic in spirit than places like

"The real problem in the press is a failure of will."



That is just one of the many provocative observations made by TOM ROSENSTIEL in *The Beat Goes On: President Clinton's First Year with the Media*. Rosenstiel, *Los Angeles Times* correspondent and author of *Strange Bedfellows*, the acclaimed book spotlighting the pervasive role played by television in the 1992 campaign, examines Clinton's relations with the press and finds that the lessons learned during the campaign were forgotten. 59 PAGES, $8.95, ISBN: 0–87078–369–6

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Irvine. Domestic life is highly reactive to shifts in cultural and aesthetic tastes, so it's plausible that traditionalism could first catch on as an idea and then sweep across the suburban landscape like so many previous trends. Merely promoting the idea of traditionalism is useful, and, more broadly, *A Better Place to Live*, like David Rusk's *Cities Without Suburbs* and Joel Garreau's *Edge City,* conveys the happy feeling that somebody out there is actively trying to find a fit between suburbanization and liberal ideals.

Nicholas Lemann, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is a national correspondent for* The Atlantic Monthly.

"No Ordinary Time"
Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Homefront in World War II
Doris Kearns Goodwin
Simon and Schuster, $30
By Chalmers M. Roberts

In early 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt asked his daughter Anna to become his hostess, filling in for the peripatetic first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. World War II was at a critical stage, and FDR would have to decide whether to run later that year for his fourth term.

Anna tried to shield the already ill president from strain and stress, but Eleanor, a self-described "pest," often made this difficult. At one White House cocktail hour, Anna recounted, Eleanor appeared, wolfed down her limit of one drink, and "sat down across the desk from Father. And she had a sheaf of papers this high and she said, 'Now, Franklin, I want to talk to you about this . . .' I just remember . . . that I thought, 'Oh God, he's going to blow.' And sure enough, he blew his top. He took every single speck of that whole pile of papers, threw them across the desk at me and said, 'Sis, you handle these tomorrow morning.'"

Eleanor said, "I'm sorry," and turned to talk to someone else; Franklin "picked up a glass and started a story."

Anna explained: "Intuitively, I understood that here was a man plagued with God knows how many problems and right now he had twenty minutes to have two cocktails . . . He wanted to tell stories and relax and enjoy himself—period. I don't think mother had the slightest realization."

The relationship between Eleanor and Franklin is central to an understanding of FDR and his presidency. And Doris Kearns Goodwin, in this massive book, has made it central to her account of the World War II years.

The major events in FDR's life were (1) his conquest of the polio that crippled him, at age 39 in 1921, for life and (2) the effect on the Eleanor-Franklin relationship of the love affair he had—pre-polio—with Eleanor's social secretary, Lucy Mercer, a younger woman "tall, beautiful, and well-bred, with a low throaty voice and an incomparably winning smile."

Goodwin adds nothing new about the polio, but she does provide the most complete, and, to me, the most satisfying account of the Lucy affair and its ramifications and consequences.

For today's generation it should at once be said that Lucy was no bimbo in the Kennedy or Clinton sense. True, in 1918, when Eleanor found a packet of Lucy's love letters, her husband was 36 and physically a whole man. Still, Goodwin is doubtful that there was a sexual relationship, either then or later; the evidence is simply lacking.

Eleanor bore Franklin's six children (the first FDR, Jr. died) but, as she told Anna, sex was "an ordeal to be borne." The Lucy affair ended their marital relations, led to separate bedrooms, and freed Eleanor "to define a new and different partnership with her husband, free to seek new avenues of fulfillment." She had long cared about issues and hated small talk. As governor of New York, Franklin had taught her to be his "eyes and ears." Unable to travel easily on his own, "he had started by teaching Eleanor how to inspect state institutions in 1929. . . " She kept on doing this kind of work after entering the White House.

This working relationship was advantageous for both. FDR depended on the information she brought him, though on occasion "she irritated and exasperated him, but he never ceased to respect and admire her." And as she once wrote him: "We are really very dependent on each other though we see so little of each other."

If she was his eyes and ears, she seldom was his hostess. As first lady, she went her own way, including writing a six-day-a-week column called "My Day" from wherever she happened to be, at home or abroad. Furthermore, she developed several very close relationships that seemed to fill a need for the kind of love that had gone out of her marriage. One of these was with Joseph P. Lash, a youthful idealist who came to love her and with whom she wrote or otherwise confided the substance of her six books. Eleanor also had close women friends, chief among them Lenora Hickock, an Associated Press reporter who gave up her career when she fell in love with Eleanor. The author writes that while their letters "possess an emotional intensity and a sensual explicitness that is hard to disregard," there is no certainty they went beyond hugs and kisses.

Franklin Roosevelt, only child of a doting mother, developed a desire to please which required a pattern of evasiveness well known during his 12 White House years. Combined with this was a "sublime confidence" and a "native optimism." He was a man whose "perpetual cheer" served him well in both Depression and war. And as Eleanor once said to Winston Churchill, "When Franklin says 'yes,

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yes, yes,' it doesn't mean he agrees with you. It means he's listening."

A gregarious man who hated to be alone, FDR required womanly affection; if Eleanor would not provide it, he would find it elsewhere. He did so with his secretary, Marguerite "Missy" Le Hand, who adored him and who played hostess in Eleanor's absence as well as being "*the* important conduit to the president." When he suffered a stroke, FDR changed his will to leave Le Hand half his estate, but she died first. After Missy came Princess Martha of Norway, "tall and willowly, full of light and gaiety"; she became "one of the president's most intimate companions." She was in and out of the White House, sometimes alone and other times with her husband and children. And there were FDR's two married cousins for company, as well as his devoted friend and adviser Harry Hopkins, who lived in the White House family quarters for years. But Hopkins finally married and moved to Georgetown.

James Roosevelt, the eldest son, said that Franklin once "approached Eleanor with the idea that they should try once more to live as man and wife," as the author puts it. The request "threw Eleanor into a tumult of conflicting emotions," but in the end her answer was no. She had become a "political force in her own right," which had produced a profoundly different sense of self—of independence, competence, and confidence.

Enter Lucy once again. Now the widow of a rich man with a teen-aged daughter as well as step-sons, Lucy came to the White House first as "Mrs. Johnson," and sometimes with her daughter, who also visited on her own. On occasion FDR was driven to Georgetown to pick Lucy up for White House visits or to go to Shangri-La, now called Camp David. In 1943, after her husband's death, the visitor was listed simply as Lucy Rutherford. Literally to his dying day, Lucy provided FDR with the love and comfort he lacked from Eleanor. The way Goodwin recounts it, the reader will most likely sympathize with Franklin rather than Eleanor.

For those today who are always conscious of the health of a president, there is recounted here the terrible story of FDR's decline and the miserable White House physician who so long had attended him, Dr. Ross McIntire, an ear-nose-and-throat man. McIntire hid the truth about FDR; his blood pressure, for readers who pay attention to their own, registered 240/130 a few weeks before his fourth election to the presidency. At the recommendation of a young cardiologist, Dr. Howard Bruenn, whom McIntire was forced to call in, FDR cut his cigarette consumption from 20 or 30 a day to five or six. Of course, it was too late; FDR died at 63.

This book recounts in much well-known detail the story of FDR's wartime leadership (essentially the war in Europe, little about the war with Japan) and his struggles and agreements with Churchill and Stalin over such critical points as the second front in Normandy and the construction of the president's dream, a new world organization to keep the peace to come. There is much about Eleanor's unflagging efforts to improve American life, especially for blacks, during the war years. Those who think Hillary Rodham Clinton is too active should read about Eleanor. Goodwin has written an entrancing, indeed magnificent account of the second half of the Roosevelt saga, the war years, with enough flashbacks to the peacetime New Deal years to give background to readers who, like Goodwin, have no personal memory of FDR and his times.

Chalmers M. Roberts is a retired reporter for The Washington Post.

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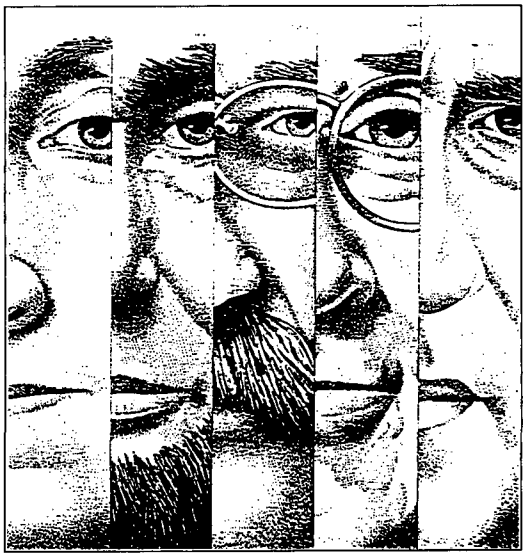

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